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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Periodic reports of States parties due in 1998

NORWAY*

[1 July 1998]

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of Norway, please see CRC/C/8/Add.7; for the consideration of the initial report by the Committee, please see CRC/C/SR.149-151.

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Introduction

1. This second periodic report is structured according to the general guidelines regarding the form and contents of periodic reports to be submitted by States parties under article 44, paragraph 1 (b), of the Convention (CRC/C/58 of 20 November 1996). Following the guidelines, the focus in this report is on changes or new developments that have taken place since Norway submitted the initial report.

2. To facilitate the examination of this report, reference is made to the initial report of Norway (CRC/C/8/Add.7 of 12 October 1993), the Committee's comments on the initial report (CRC/C/15/Add.23 of 25 April 1994), and to Norway's reply to the comments (submitted on 2 August 1996). Reference is also made to the Norwegian "core document" (HRI/CORE/1/Add.6 of 3 June 1992) concerning information on land and people, general political structure, general legal framework within which human rights are protected and information and publicity.

3. A description of some of the challenges facing Norway and great parts of the international community concerning the development and living conditions of children and young people will be presented in the first section of the report.

I. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

4. Most societies face the dilemma that yesterday's solutions do not always match today's problems. In Norway, as in many other countries around the world, society changes so rapidly that a gap might arise between existing policies and the ability to cope with new challenges. This is partly a result of the growing international influence. Developments in society take place in a complex system of economic and cultural influences that cut across national borders. This affects children and young people in particular because they are in a phase of their lives when they are easily influenced. In order to strengthen the positive consequences of increased international influence, and to combat the negative ones, international cooperation concerning a large number of common problems and challenges should be enhanced.

5. Information about the living conditions of children and young people and on measures that can improve these conditions should also be exchanged to a greater extent across national borders. A comparative approach to such research would increase the possibility of finding solutions that are relevant to modern society.

6. Some of the trends that characterize the situation of children and young people in Norway today are described below. As many of these trends have major international aspects, they should be dealt with not only on a national basis, but should also be subject to international attention and cooperation.

Children and young people as agents of social change

7. In previous times, when our society was less complex, more or less all learning of any significance took place in the form of transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. This vertical socialization still is a

cornerstone in most societies, but in addition the learning process has become more complex. A significant amount of socialization and cultural transfers take place in the form of a horizontal process between children and young people, within their own country as well as between countries.

8. In recent decades the outlines of yet another dimension of socialization have emerged. In certain fields, the adult community receives so much important input from children and young people that the traditional learning process has been reversed. There are several reasons for this. Young people in Norway today spend a longer time on their education, and are older than earlier generations before settling with a job and a family. This freedom from responsibility makes them less bound by convention, more open to alternatives and quick to pick up emerging ideas. Young people serve as antennas picking up signals too faint for adults to notice. This applies to a number of areas, including gender equality, opposition to violence and racism, involvement in the environment, new trends in fashion and music, and especially in relation to the new media.

9. Given this dimension, it is perhaps more important than ever to secure and facilitate participation in society by children and young people. Children and young people today represent new resources and they are agents of change. How this potential is to be utilized is largely up to the adults.

The parents' role in modern society

10. The family plays a fundamental role in children's lives, in terms of socialization, the dissemination of values and the creation of confidence. However, the role of parents has been affected by changes in many areas of society, such as changes in the local community, parents' increasing participation in working life and rapid cultural changes.

11. In Norway, the local community no longer plays the role as a secure base in the lives of children and young people as it used to. Parents at work, children in day-care institutions, schools and organized leisure activities mean that homes are closed and the local community is almost devoid of people during the day. The informal "control system" and security provided by knowing the neighbours have been weakened. Thus children and adolescents are in some ways more dependent on their parents and close families than before. Today's parents are normally determined to give their children security and a good upbringing, but they also want to play an active role at work and in society. Parents meet increasing demands on their time and attention. Conflicts can arise between economic demands and parents' career ambitions on the one hand, and children's need for security and their parents' presence on the other.

12. Rapid cultural changes may cause parents to feel alienated from the factors that influence their children. The role of mentor and guide becomes difficult. This is often apparent when the cultural change has happened very quickly as sometimes seen in immigrant families, who have moved from one culture to another. But the cultural gap also occurs between generations in general.

13. An increasing challenge in our society is to enable children and parents to spend more time together, and also to reduce the negative effects of cultural gaps between children and parents. A comparison between the policies and measures carried out in different countries may help to throw light on these questions.

The significance of education for social adaptation

14. Over the decades, we have invested a great deal in making education on all levels available to everybody. Has this investment resulted in greater equality and a reduction in class distinctions as was intended, or have new class distinctions arisen?

15. The development of advanced technology and the expansion of the service sector require more stringent educational qualifications than was the case a few decades ago. Today it may be difficult in Norway to find a job without many years of education and specialized training as well. The labour market is changing more rapidly than before, and employees must be prepared to change jobs several times during their working life. This requires broad and relatively comprehensive basic qualifications rather than early specialization.

16. Some young people do not manage to live up to the expectations of the modern education society. They drop out early and are perhaps never going to enter working life. This represents challenges to the educational system. We must keep striving for an educational system which aims at ensuring that as many as possible find work.

Children and young people from ethnic minorities

17. Many societies this century have experienced increased ethnic diversity as a result of immigration. The work-related immigration to many countries, the family reunification often following this immigration, and the different refugee flows all over the world have contributed to this. The population groups that immigrated during the past few decades are already permanent inhabitants of Norway, and have given us a population with greater cultural diversity than before.

18. In Norway, many young people, who are first or second generation immigrants, feel Norwegian on the one hand and Pakistani, Vietnamese, Iranian, etc. on the other. Research shows that children who cope best and get the best results at school, are those who do not break their ties with their parents' culture, and who at the same time are able to function on the new society's terms. Challenges related to improvement of integration measures are international, and should result in greater knowledge of living conditions and schooling conditions for children and young people who belong to ethnic minorities. International as well as national measures on enhancing equal status and integration into society as a whole, is needed.

The significance of the media for the development of children and young people

19. Children in Norway live in a world where the media has a growing influence on their everyday lives. Television and video expand children's and young people's world of experience to an extent that was unthinkable only a few decades ago.

20. E-mail and the Internet provide children and young people with new and major opportunities to expand their knowledge to a considerable extent, and this applies to both schoolwork and knowledge in other fields. The new communication technology helps to spread knowledge and make contact across national borders and therefore has great potential as an internationalization factor. This trend is mainly positive, but there is also a danger that the new information technology will contribute to new divisions, since some children have access to this at home while others have not. Another challenge that should be addressed is that the new technology seems to appeal more to boys than to girls.

21. Both television and video and the Internet create opportunities for harmful influences and information, for example through increased access to games involving violence in visual media, and through illegal pornography through the Internet. National legislation and guidelines can only offer limited protection against harmful media influences. This is because the authorities have difficulty in keeping legislation up to date with technological advances and because these media are part of an international network that cannot be regulated by national legislation alone. Thus, any wish to influence the development of the media will require international cooperation.

What is the best interest of the child in child welfare cases?

22. Child welfare cases confront the authorities with very difficult ethical problems. Decisions on taking a child into care, deprivation of parental responsibility, a child's right of access to parents, as well as adoption are tied to ideas of right and wrong in a very fundamental manner. In most countries the overriding legislative principle is, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the decision must be in the best interest of the child. Legislation only has a partial influence on the final decision. In the last instance decisions will be based on personal as well as professional judgement. This will be based on the social worker's set of values, which is a product of the society in which he or she lives.

23. Different cultures place different emphasis on the parents' right to make decisions concerning their children and on the rights of children themselves. This may cause a dilemma when international agreements and conventions are being negotiated. Such dilemmas can only be resolved with the help of international forums for discussion and the development of common attitudes, values and policies.

Narcotics problems

24. New patterns concerning use of alcohol and narcotics among young people in Norway have emerged in recent years. The spread of narcotics is an

international problem. International cooperation is necessary to limit access to drugs. New types of drugs and new consumption patterns spread rapidly from country to country, and the exchange of information in international cooperation should be strengthened in order to register the danger signals as early as possible. It is important that individual member States comply with United Nations conventions concerning drugs, and with regard to the prevention and treatment of alcohol and narcotics problems, we should strengthen research and the exchange of information between countries.

Violence in the community

25. Many societies, including Norway, face the phenomena of increased violence and crime rates. The use of weapons is increasing and there is more violence in the streets, as well as random violence and violence in the home. Extremist nationalistic movements are also attracting more support and there is a clear trend towards racially motivated violence. Conflicts arise between groups of young people, and the need to "defend oneself" against other groups can lead to violence. In recent years organized crime with international links has spread to Norway and in these circles the use of violence is often connected with the sale of narcotics.

26. We should be aware of the connection between the increasing use of violence in the community and the increasing use of brutal violence in the visual media. The increase in brutality and media violence is an international phenomenon. What are the reasons for such trends, and what can we do to stop them? Preventive action must be taken at the individual, national and international levels.

Foreign policy with a child perspective

27. In the current rapid process of globalization, there is a risk that measures relating to children become fragmented, and therefore there is a need for cross-sectoral technical and economic cooperation on the international level. In order to enhance international cooperation and the coordination of international programmes, it is important that child and youth policy be part of all foreign policy. This will contribute to a greater focus on children's problems in the international arena and will lead to greater awareness of the potential that children and young people represent. Moreover, all development aid should in particular be focusing on the needs of children, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

II. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION
(arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6)

28. Norway's only reservation to the Convention, which was made upon ratification with respect to article 40 (2)(b)(v) of the Convention, concerned the right of the child to legal review by a higher competent authority or court in connection with decisions relating to violations of criminal law. The reservation was withdrawn on 19 September 1995, following amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act. (Reference is made to the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/15/Add.23), para. 13).

29. In principle, Norway subscribes to dualism. However, international law serves as a source of law when determining national law, and Norwegian law must as far as possible be interpreted so as to be in accordance with international law. The most common method for implementing human rights treaties in Norway has been to ascertain that national law is in harmony with the relevant convention (ascertainment of normative harmony).

30. A committee of experts appointed in 1989 by the Norwegian Government (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) was given the task of proposing the necessary constitutional or statutory provisions for implementing in national law the principal human rights instruments that are binding on Norway. In 1994 a provision concerning international human rights law was included in the Norwegian Constitution in accordance with a proposal set forth by the Committee. The new provision (art. 110 (c)) reads: "It is incumbent upon the authorities of the State to respect and to ensure human rights. Further provisions concerning the implementation of treaties thereon shall be laid down by statute."

31. A bill proposing the incorporation of certain human rights treaties is currently being considered by the Government and is expected to be transmitted to the Storting in the near future.

Judicial decisions applying the principles and provisions of the Convention - best interest of the child

32. Section 4-1 of the Act relating to child welfare services of 17 July 1992 states that decisive importance shall be attached to adapting measures which are in the best interest of the child. Thus, when the Supreme Court evaluates whether or not an intervention is in accordance with the provisions in the Act relating to child welfare services, it applies the same principle as that explicitly stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The following is an example of a judicial decision applying this principle.

33. In the case of Johansen v. Norway (1996), the European Court of Human Rights held that the Norwegian authorities had violated article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, insofar as the applicant was deprived of access and parental rights in respect of her daughter. The public care measures at issue in the case were based on provisions set out in the Child Welfare Act of 17 July 1953. This Act was replaced by the above-mentioned Act (Act of 17 July 1992 relating to child welfare services) which entered into force on 1 January 1993. The information given in the judgement, concerning how the legal protection of the bonds between the biological parents and the child were strengthened by the 1992 Act, is of particular interest.

Special priority areas for policies related to children in Norway

34. The spirit and the provisions of the Convention are incorporated into a number of plans in various fields which will be discussed and referred to throughout the present report. With the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs as the coordinating body, the aim has been to ensure that the perspectives and provisions of the Convention are widely known and have had a general influence on policy.

Developing child welfare services

35. A three-year National Development Program for Child Welfare ended in December 1993. The aim of the programme was to create a child care service that provides help when needed, and that is in the best interest of the child. Funds for the programme were earmarked by the Storting (NKr 300 million in 1991, NKr 507 million in 1992 and NKr 490 million in 1993). The grants have been kept at about the same level since the termination of the programme (1993/94) but are now largely allocated as part of the block grants to counties and municipalities.

36. The experience gained from the National Development Program for Child Welfare and the development of the child welfare service since 1993 was discussed in a report that was presented to the Storting in 1996 (Report No. 39 (1995-96) to the Storting). In general, the targets of the programme were considered to have been met.

37. Foster homes are the most important measure in the child welfare service. Almost 80 per cent of cases of transfer of care from the family involve placement in foster homes. In 1995, comprehensive plans for the foster home service were implemented in each country, with the aim of improving recruitment, training and follow-up of foster families. A national plan of action for the foster home service has been drafted (1997).

38. A national plan of action for children and adolescents with serious behaviour disorders was drawn up in 1997.

39. The number of employees in the municipal child welfare service has increased considerably, particularly from 1991 to 1995, and this has resulted in a growing need for raising the level of expertise. A plan for competence-building in the child welfare service was drawn up in 1995.

40. A research programme on child welfare (1997-2001) and a programme on evaluating the effects of both the new Act relating to child welfare services and the Act relating to social services have been coordinated by the Research Council of Norway.

41. In 1995 the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs drew up a strategic plan for information concerning child welfare services in Norway (1995-97). The purpose of the plan was to provide information about the service to the population in general and to improve the dialogue between the child welfare service, the public and the media.

Following up the plan of action against sexual abuse of children

42. As a follow-up to the plan of action against sexual abuse of children, the Government presented a report on the issue in 1993 (Report No. 53 (1992/93) to the Storting). The suggestions in the report were aimed at strengthening children's legal protection and protection against sexual abuse, and at strengthening the right of the child welfare service to intervene as early as possible and to provide optimal assistance (reference is made to paragraphs 381-383 of this report). A strengthening of the capacity for investigating such cases and efforts at increasing expertise among

investigators have taken place. Following an amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act in 1997, the examination of children can be conducted by experts. This applies primarily to children of pre-school age, but may be applied to children up to 14 years of age, depending on the circumstances. Examinations are to be videotaped and may also be recorded on audiotape.

Efforts related to children and adolescents with immigrant backgrounds

43. A plan of action for children and adolescents with immigrant backgrounds was implemented as from 1996, coordinated by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and involving six different ministries altogether.

44. A report on immigration and multicultural Norway was issued in 1997 (Report No. 17 (1996/97) to the Storting).

Development programme for improving living conditions for children and adolescents

45. As part of the efforts to improve living conditions for children and adolescents, the Government has developed a programme (1998-2001) for improving the conditions under which children grow up, and reducing the risk of problems developing. The programme further aims at improving the opportunities for children and adolescents to participate and cope successfully with their home situation, school, working life and leisure activities. The programme also reinforces to prevent violent behaviour, bullying, drug use, criminal behaviour and racism in local communities. The programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, and eight ministries have contributed to its development.

National programme for parental guidance

46. A national programme for parental guidance has been implemented as from 1995. The programme aims to support parents through a voluntary system of guidance. (Reference is made to paras. 150-152 of this report).

Child Line

47. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 42-45.

48. The Norwegian Red Cross has run a contact line for children and adolescents for more than 10 years. In 1997, the contact line had 209,857 calls from children. The service is open between 14.00 and 20.00 Monday through Friday. The Child Line has been available throughout the nation since 1993, organized through 18 district units and staffed by around 630 volunteers.

Measures to increase awareness among adults and children of the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 42)

49. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 46-55.

50. In the new primary school curriculum (Reform 97; reference is made to chapter VII, section A in this report), explicit references are made to the

Convention on the Rights of the Child, both as general guiding principles for education and as an element in the educational content. Thus, it is obligatory to provide children with information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

51. During 1991-1996, the Ministry of Chidren and Family Affairs has allocated NKr 4 million to information measures intended to increase awareness of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Part of these allocations has been given to non-governmental organizations with projects in this area.

52. In 1996, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs produced a new short version of the Convention reproduced on posters in the major immigrant languages, in addition to the two versions in Norwegian and the Sami language. The posters have been widely distributed. A booklet with the full text of the Convention has been printed in four editions (altogether 50,000 copies).

53. The Norwegian Youth Council is circulating the Convention on the Rights of the Child to children in Norway for comments. The project, which is called "Barnehøring '98", has a workbook specially targeted at children, which will be circulated to children in 3,000 local branches of six children and youth organizations. The responses will form the basis of a book ("Barnehøringsboken") and of a hearing where children and young people are invited ("Barnehøringsdagen"). The aim is to spread information about the Convention to the members of these organizations through specific activities in children's local communities, and to make children aware of their rights and duties under the Convention. At the hearing the children themselves will be talking to politicians and other adults working with child policy issues. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has provided economic support for the project as part of its strategy for disseminating information about the Convention.

The Commissioner for Children

54. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 34-4.

55. In 1994 the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs appointed a committee with a mandate to evaluate the Office of the Commissioner for Children, which was established in 1981. The Committee was to consider the function of the Commissioner, its role and competence, including an evaluation of its means and measures. It also looked into the consequences for children of initiatives made by the Commissioner. The Committee's report was presented in 1995 (NOU 1995:26). The report resulted in an amendment to the Act relating to the Commissioner for Children (Proposition No. 5 (1997/98) to the Odelsting), which states that the Commissioner should monitor law enforcement and administrative practice, and verify whether this practice corresponds to Norway's obligations according to the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Childwatch International

56. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 324 and 325.

57. Childwatch International is an international network of institutions and individuals involved in research on children. Childwatch initiates and coordinates research and information projects on children's living conditions and the implementation of children's rights. The secretariat is located at the University of Oslo and the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has allocated grants to the running of the secretariat from its establishment in 1992 to 1996, when NKr 1 million was allocated. Childwatch International has also been given funds by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1996 the organization received NKr 810,000 from the Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

International cooperation

58. Reference is also made to paragraphs 238-244, 306, 310, 345, 346 and 385-386 of this report.

59. In the follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 1990, the Global Plan of Action and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Norwegian Government drew up a strategy for assisting children in Norwegian development cooperation in 1992. The strategy covers bilateral as well as multilateral assistance. In accordance with this strategy, more attention has been given to concentrating Norwegian overseas development assistance (ODA) on targets that benefit children directly. Priority areas include children's rights, health and nutrition, education, care and early stimulation of children, and vulnerable groups of children with special protection needs. An internal review of the implementation of the strategy was carried out in 1996. The report on Norway's implementation of the plan of action from the 1990 World Summit for Children gives an indication of the measures taken to improve child welfare and development and to safeguard children's rights in developing countries through Norwegian bilateral and multilateral development cooperation. An external evaluation of the strategy was carried out in 1997/98.

60. The Norwegian Government initiated an international conference on child labour in Oslo in October 1997. Norway's intention in respect of the conference was to identify how Norway and other countries could actively help to speed progress towards real implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and respect for ILO Convention No. 138 as well as other relevant international instruments through development assistance and other forms of international cooperation. The main objective of the Oslo conference was to identify national and international strategies for the elimination of child labour. A plan of action to combat child labour was unanimously agreed upon by representatives from around 40 countries.

61. One of the main priority areas for Norwegian development assistance is support for basic social services. Norway hopes to reach the goal of devoting at least 20 per cent of total ODA to this field in the near future. Norway has taken a strong interest in following up the so-called 20/20 initiative from the Social Summit. In order to review issues related to the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands invited a number of interested countries and multilateral organizations to a meeting in Oslo in April 1996. High-ranking representatives from 22 developing countries and 16 industrialized countries,

as well as relevant multilateral organizations attended the meeting. The meeting resulted in agreement on a number of key issues. The Oslo Consensus on the 20/20 initiative has been issued as a United Nations document (A/51/140, annex).

Norwegian development assistance to children in 1996

62. The following table shows Norwegian development assistance to children, in millions of kroner and as a percentage of the total.*

		%
Total Norwegian development assistance	8 172.6	100
Share of which bilateral assistance (including multi-bilateral)	5 745.3	
Share of multilateral assistance	2 368.5	100
Share of multilateral assistance to organizations which promote children's needs and rights	275.0	12
Total bilateral assistance	5 745.3	100
Share of bilateral assistance to children and promotion of children's rights	312.4	5
Share of total bilateral assistance to health	536.0	9
Share of total bilateral assistance to education	484.5	8
Share of total bilateral assistance to social sector	360.6	6
Share of total bilateral assistance to other sectors	4 374.2	76
Total development assistance to children (bilateral and multilateral)	587.4	7

Preparation of the report

63. The preparation of this report was conducted according to guidelines for periodic reports to treaty bodies developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has coordinated the report and other ministries have contributed. Various non-governmental organizations, as well as independent government agencies, have been kept informed and consulted in the preparation process.

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* The numbers are somewhat imprecise, due to limitations regarding registration of projects directed towards children in the database for Norwegian development assistance. The numbers should therefore be understood as an indication of the share of Norwegian development assistance directed towards children. Steps are now being taken to improve the database for development assistance. Improved and more accurate reporting on child-related assistance will be available by the year 1999.

Measures to make Norway's report widely available (art. 44.6)

64. A large number of copies (10,000) of Norway's 1993 report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child have been printed in Norwegian. The report has been distributed to NGOs, to public sector agencies that work in areas affected by the Convention, to colleges for personnel who work with children and adolescents, and to all the municipalities in the country. The English version of the report has been printed in 2,000 copies and is used as information material and in international cooperation (reference is also made to paragraphs 50-53 of this report).

III. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD (art. 1)

Age of majority

65. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 57.

Schooling and education

66. Reference is made to chapter VII, section A of this report concerning the recent reforms in primary and lower secondary school and in upper secondary school.

Paid work

67. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 60-62.

68. Norway has adopted and is following the provisions of ILO Convention No. 138, the Minimum Age Convention (1973), and Recommendation No. 146 concerning this Convention.

The child's right to be heard and right to progressive self-determination

69. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 63-71.

Medical questions

70. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 72-74.

The obligation to give evidence

71. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 75-76.

Driving licences

72. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 77.

Passports

73. A new Passport Act was passed in 1997, replacing the previous passport regulations. The Act emphasizes the independent status of the child and provides greater security for children. In cases of conflict between the

parents, the provisions of the Children Act will be applicable when issuing passports to children. All children must have their own passport when travelling to other countries (i.e. other than the Nordic countries). Children are therefore no longer entered in their parents' passports. The amendment is intended to strengthen children's security and reduce opportunities for abduction.

Age of criminal liability

74. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 79.

Legal age of sexual consent

75. The legal age of sexual consent in Norway is 16 years. An inquiry presented in 1997 suggested reducing it to 15 years, but there seems to be little political support for this suggestion. The Government is expected to submit a Proposition to the Storting on the matter in the near future.

Legal age of marriage

76. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 81.

The right to vote

77. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 82.

Compulsory and voluntary military service

78. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 83-85.

Films

79. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 86.

Sale of restricted goods

80. In an amendment to the Tobacco Act in 1996, the sale of tobacco products - or imitations that may promote the use of such products - to persons under 18 years (previously 16) of age is prohibited. Further reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 87-90.

IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. Non-discrimination (art. 2)

81. With respect to paragraph 1, reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 91-93, and to the consideration of Norway's initial report by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, paragraph 12.

Children without legal residence

82. As of 1 December 1996, the asylum seekers who had sought refuge in Norwegian churches after having had their applications for asylum rejected

included a total of 29 children. Subsequent to a decision of 9 December 1996 by the Minister of Justice, where it was decided to establish an independent commission to investigate the matter, 27 of the children left the churches with their families and they returned to the reception centres to await the outcome of the re-examination of their cases.

83. The commission's task was to consider the humanitarian aspects of the situation of each child in church asylum, and to recommend that the Ministry reconsider its previous decisions on the situation of the children. A report was presented in July 1997, recommending that 11 of 15 families with children should be given permission to remain in the country.

84. According to the Immigration Act, the general rule is that only aliens with legal residence in Norway have the same rights and obligations as Norwegian citizens. The Immigration Act does not prohibit differentiation between (a) children who have had their asylum requests rejected but who remain in the country, and (b) children with residence permits or Norwegian citizenship. Whether or not children without residence permits enjoy the same rights and obligations as others depends on the particular act governing the rights and obligations in question.

85. In order to ensure the right to education of all children, including children without residence permits, the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act was amended in 1997. According to the amended Act, a child has a right to primary and lower secondary education as soon as it is probable that he/she will stay in Norway for more than three months. There is no reference in the Act to the legality of the stay.

86. According to the Local Authority Health Care Act (1982), a person has the right to necessary primary health care in the municipality where he/she is a resident or is temporarily staying. The wording of the Act does not exclude a person without a residence permit from this right. The question which has been raised, however, is whether it follows from the Immigration Act that persons without residence permits do not have this right. In a letter dated 20 August 1996 the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has stated that the Immigration Act does not restrict the right to necessary medical assistance laid down in the Local Authority Health Care Act. According to the interpretation by the Ministry, children without a residence permit therefore have the right to the necessary health care. However, the fact that the children do not have a residence permit is relevant when deciding what can be deemed to be necessary health care.

87. According to the Medical Practitioners Act (1980), health personnel have a duty to provide health care in cases of emergency. The right to health care in emergency situations applies equally to persons with and without residence permits.

88. The Act relating to child welfare services applies to everyone residing in Norway, and the Act contains no distinction between legal and illegal residence.

89. With respect to paragraph 2, reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 91-93.

Measures against racism and discrimination

90. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, in cooperation with several other ministries, is revising the plan of action against racism and ethnic discrimination launched in 1992. The new plan of action will be completed in 1998. The plan will focus on discrimination in the labour market and the need to increase the expertise of public sector employees providing services to a multicultural population. The plan of action will also deal with the challenge of how to react more firmly and quickly to racially motivated violence and harassment and will also focus on the improvement of documentation and statistical data on race-related crime. Two broad campaigns against racism have been carried out: the national "Youth Campaign Against Racism" in 1994 and the European "All Equal All Different" in 1995.

91. The Norwegian Government will improve the legal aid available to victims of racial discrimination. It has been pointed out that victims of such discrimination frequently face social and economic barriers which prevent them from instituting legal proceedings. For a trial period of five years, depending on grants from the Storting, an independent centre will be established to provide professional legal advice for individuals who are victims of racial discrimination. The idea is that this will help persons who experience such discrimination and who have difficulty in approaching lawyers or the authorities. It will give them the necessary security and support and the authorities will gain experience on how to provide effective protection from discrimination. Annual reports will be issued and contribute to the documentation of these challenges. This centre will also serve as a resource for advisers to refugees and other professionals working on legal issues concerning discrimination. In 1998, the Storting granted NKr 5 million to the centre.

Gender equality

92. The Norwegian Gender Equality Act entered into force in 1979. It promotes equality between the two sexes and prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex in all areas of life. There is no direct discrimination in Norwegian legislation.

93. In the 1980s there was an increasing tendency towards more untraditional choices in education among both girls and boys, but today (1997) student choices have again become more traditional. Female students are under-represented in the natural sciences, mathematics and information technology. Preferential treatment of women has been employed by many technical colleges in order to raise the percentage of women in science and technology. The Government gives priority to reforms for stimulating women's interest in information and technological training programmes and a number of measures have been implemented to improve the situation.

Equality in schools

94. Reference is made in paragraph 85 in this report concerning the right to primary and lower secondary education of children without legal residence.

Reference is also made to chapter VII, section A, concerning reforms in the upper secondary school and in the primary and lower secondary school.

95. All schoolchildren must be taught about the Sami culture and way of life, as this is recognized as being part of Norway's common cultural heritage. An adapted curriculum for Sami districts has been developed, which strengthens and supports the cultural identity of these children. Furthermore, special curricula have been developed for deaf children (sign language) and for children with Finnish as second language.

96. Children from linguistic minorities are normally offered instruction in their mother tongue as a tool for learning Norwegian. They may receive their first training in reading and writing in their mother tongue, and teaching in other subjects in both languages.

97. In 1996, 5.8 per cent of all children in primary and lower secondary school belonged to linquistic minorities. Of the 28,138 pupils from these minorities, 12,770 were being given instruction and/or teaching in their mother tongue at school.

B. Best interest of the child (art. 3)

98. The principle of the best interest of the child is explicitly laid down in the Children Act and in the Act relating to child welfare services (reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 94-104). All decisions concerning parental responsibility, daily care and visiting rights should be made on the basis of the best interest of the child. Amendments to the Children Act were passed on 10 June 1997, and entered into force in January 1998. The interests of children and adolescents in matters relating to municipal and local planning are regulated by the Planning and Building Act and the national policy guidelines to promote the interests of children and adolescents with regard to planning (reference is made to paragraphs 126-129). The Adoption Act contains a provision stating that the best interest of the child should always be considered and given weight in adoption cases.

Immigration, asylum-seeking and refugee procedures

99. The principle of the best interest of the child is safeguarded in the asylum-seeking process by a number of specific procedures and by provisions concerning the right to asylum and to a residence permit. The relevant provisions are set out in the Immigration Act, the appurtenant regulations and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Justice and the Directorate of Immigration.

100. Section 4 of the Immigration Act states that this Act shall be applied in accordance with the international rules by which Norway is bound when these are intended to strengthen the position of a foreign national. The principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are considered to strengthen the position of a foreign national who is a child, and are thus applicable in areas covered by the Immigration Act.

101. All applicants, including unaccompanied minors, are protected by a number of legal safeguards during the asylum-seeking process:

(a) An asylum seeker is interviewed by a police officer (a proposal to transfer this task to the Directorate of Immigration is currently under consideration). An interpreter is summoned if the applicant and the officer are not able to communicate satisfactorily in a common language;

(b) The police must inform the applicant of his/her right to be assisted by a lawyer throughout the process, free of charge;

(c) The applicant has the right to have the decision of the first instance reviewed by a higher authority.

102. With regard to refugee children, Norway follows the 1994 Guidelines on Protection and Care set by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and specific measures have been adopted for these children. Special priority is given to unaccompanied minors, as these are considered to be particularly vulnerable. The measures include the following:

(a) The application for asylum follows the ordinary asylum procedure. Before a residence permit is granted, efforts will be made to repatriate the child. However, an unaccompanied minor will not be returned to the country of origin, even if there are no grounds to fear persecution, if the minor has no parents or other care-givers in the country of origin (an exception is made when the child can return together with a care-giver);

(b) Particular priority is given to efficient handling of asylum claims from minors, as a long waiting period is considered to be especially burdensome for the child;

(c) Provisional guardians are appointed for unaccompanied minors. The minor must always have the provisional guardian or a lawyer present during police interviews;

(d) Specific guidelines for the examination of unaccompanied minors have been issued for the police;

(e) With regard to unaccompanied minors, the police are instructed to take into consideration the age of the child and to be particularly flexible when a time limit for voluntary departure is set. A rejected asylum seeker who does not comply with an order to leave the country voluntarily may be escorted out by the police. In the case of an unaccompanied minor, the police must notify the head of the reception centre no later than noon the day before the procedures for escorting the minor out of the country are to start.

103. In 1996, extra grants were given to municipalities with a large number of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers to improve the services for this group. New guidelines for settling unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in a municipality are currently being drawn up by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

104. A guiding principle in asylum cases where children are accompanied by their parents or other adults with parental responsibility is the principle of family unity. The status of the other family members is normally the same as that of the head of the family/the asylum applicant. However, the immigration regulations explicitly state that the police must also clearly establish whether any accompanying children under the age of 18 are applying for asylum.

105. First of all it has to be decided whether or not an applicant is a refugee and in need of international protection as stated in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. If an application for ayslum is rejected, the authorities are subsequently obliged to consider whether the applicant should be given a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. A guiding principle in this respect is that the best interest of the child must be a primary consideration. Applications for residence permits are refused in cases where it is established that the need for international protection is non-existent and there are no humanitarian grounds for granting such a permit.

106. Asylum seekers who have had their applications rejected are ordered to leave the country within a prescribed time limit (ordinarily 14 days). However, in cases involving families with children who have followed the ordinary asylum procedures, the police are instructed to consider a more generous time-frame.

C. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)

107. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 105-113.

108. In 1994, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs started a programme for the prevention of suicide in Norway. The programme will run for a period of six years.

109. The total number of suicides among boys and young men under the age of 25 decreased during the early 1990s. However, this reduction is due to lower figures for the 20-24 age group. Among younger boys, the figures seem to be stable, i.e. 4-6 per year in the age groups under 14 years and 25-27 in the 15-19 year age group. The number of suicides among girls and young women under 25 years has not shown the same reduction as for boys in the same time period (1991-1994). The number of suicides among girls aged 10-14 has stabilized at 2 suicides per year (since 1992) and the number of suicides varies between 2 and 4 for girls aged 15 to 19.

D. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

110. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 114-116. Concerning children's participation in local planning, reference is made to paragraphs 117-122 in Norway's initial report and to paragraphs 126-129 in the present report.

111. The Children Act primarily regulates the relationship between children and parents, but also the relationship between children and public services. According to this Act, the opinion of the child must be heard and given weight

in decisions on behalf of the child, including the question of which parent the child should live with. This means that public services have a duty to consult the child, although without putting the child under pressure.

112. In civil proceedings a guardian must as a rule represent children under the age of 18. Children therefore have no legal capacity to act on their own, although the Civil Procedure Act is interpreted as providing for an independent right for a child over the age of 16 years to be present and to express his/her view during the proceedings even if the guardian is against it. As a rule, the guardian decides whether a child under 16 years may be present during the proceedings. The court may, however, overrule such a decision by the guardian, and may also require to meet the child in person.

113. The Act relating to child welfare services regulates children's rights when their cases are being dealt with. A child shall be informed and consulted when this is justified by the maturity and stage of development of the child and the nature of the case. If the child is older than 12 years, he/she shall be given the opportunity to express his/her view before a decision is taken on placement in a foster home, an institution or a move at a later stage. According to the Act relating to child welfare services, a child may act as a party in a case if he/she is older than 15 years and understands what the case is about.

114. According to the Adoption Act, a child that is older than 12 years may him/herself decide whether or not to be adopted. The general provision in the Children Act also applies in cases of adoption.

Asylum-seeking procedures

115. According to the Norwegian immigration regulations, the total life situation of any accompanying child under the age of 18 must be elucidated during the examination of the principal asylum applicant. In this connection, an interview must be conducted with children between the ages of 12 and 18, if this is deemed necessary.

116. An application for asylum must be presented in writing or orally to the police. The applicant is then interviewed as soon as possible. At present, the task of interviewing lies with the police, but a proposal to transfer this task to the Directorate of Immigration is currently being considered. An interpreter is summoned if the applicant and the officer are not able to communicate satisfactorily in a common language. The applicant is also entitled to legal assistance throughout the application process, free of charge.

117. According to the immigration regulations, an unaccompanied minor applying for asylum must always have a provisional guardian or lawyer present during the interview. Detailed guidelines have been issued regarding the examination of unaccompanied minors. The police officer conducting the interview is instructed to create a calm atmosphere, to let the minor speak freely as much as possible without interrupting or forcing the child to answer questions, and to stop the examination if there are indications that the child is tired.

118. With regard to children who accompany their parents or other adults with parental responsibility, the immigration regulations state that the total life situation of these children must be elucidated during the examination of the parents. In this connection a separate interview must be conducted by the police with children between 12 and 18 years of age, if this seems necessary in order to shed light on the case. In the guidelines for the police, the child's physical and mental state of health, previous traumatic experiences and risks they may be exposed to if they are returned from Norway are emphasized as areas requiring special consideration.

119. The situation of children who accompany asylum applicants has attracted attention on several occasions and the fact that the issue has not been given higher priority has been criticized. The commission that was appointed to consider the church asylum cases in 1997 (see paras. 82-83) is among the bodies that have voiced such concern.

Participation in local decision-making and planning

120. The Government has for several years supported local development projects that encourage participation by children and adolescents in municipal and local planning. Models and methods for involving children and adolescents in planning and decision-making processes have been developed and tested in around 25 per cent of the municipalities, and other municipalities are interested in implementing similar models. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and the Norwegian Association of Local Authorities have distributed a report which presents a number of models.

121. Participation is thought to improve the accuracy and quality of the measures directed at children and adolescents. It can also be of importance in developing knowledge about how democratic societies function, and about democratic attitudes and practices. Experience from many of these projects and processes has shown that children and adolescents have contributed valuable information and that the solutions chosen have benefited the whole local population. Where participation has been tried out, it has led to greater political involvement and interest in local democracy among adolescents.

122. The reform of primary and lower secondary education (reference is made to chapter VII, section A in this report) has carried on the tradition of school democracy. Pupils' Councils are obligatory in lower secondary school and in each class a children's representative is elected. The council expresses the pupils' views and raises matters for discussion.

123. A recent survey of children's and adolescents' participation in local decision-making and planning has shown increasing activity, particularly from 1991 onwards. The study comprises 210 different projects in 188 different municipalities. A large proportion of the projects concern the shaping of the local community and the physical environment and environmental protection, but there are also a number of projects aiming directly at influencing political decisions in matters that concern children and adolescents. The majority of the projects are the result of local political decisions.

124. The Norwegian Council for Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs have provided support for a project entitled "Children's influence on the cultural activities of organizations". The aim of the project is to give children and young people greater opportunities to take part in decision-making processes in the cultural work of child and youth organizations. Models of ways in which children and young people can take part in such decision-making have been tested.

Consideration of the interest of the child in matters related to planning

125. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 117-122.

126. An evaluation of the use of the national policy guidelines for planning was published in 1996. One of the main findings of the evaluation was that the guidelines to safeguard the interests of children and adolescents in planning have had a relatively strong impact on specific objectives and strategies in municipality and county planning. The practical follow-up in matters relating to planning in the municipalities does, however, vary.

127. According to the Planning and Building Act, the municipalities must encourage participation from children and adolescents as an important part of the local planning. As of 1997 approximately 33 per cent of Norwegian municipalities have invited children and adolescents to participate in planning activities.

128. The municipalities have a key role in the follow-up of Local Agenda 21, which should be incorporated into municipal planning. In this respect, the Government has requested the municipalities to make an effort to increase participation, especially by children and adolescents.

129. The position of a "Children's Representative", i.e. a municipal officer representing the interests of children and adolescents in planning and building matters, has existed since 1989. Reference is made to paragraph 122 in Norway's initial report and to paragraph 22 in Norway's reply of 2 August 1996 to the Committee's comments to the initial report. The "Children's Representative Fact File" is currently under revision.

V. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (arts. 7, 8, 13-17 and 37 (a))

A. Name and nationality (art. 7)

130. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 123-130.

131. The following amendments to the Citizen Act were proposed in 1997: 1. Pursuant to this proposal the child should acquire Norwegian citizenship if the father was a Norwegian citizen when the child was born, if paternity is acknowledged by the father or by the court, if the mother agrees in cases where she has sole parental responsibility, and if the immigration authorities have been informed in writing. 2. Adopted children should automatically acquire Norwegian citizenship if they are under the age of 12 and are adopted by a Norwegian citizen, and if the necessary permission for adoption has been given by Norwegian authorities.

132. Concerning the right of a child to know his or her origins, Norwegian law makes an exception for children conceived by artificial insemination using sperm from sperm donors. According to section 2-7 of the Act relating to the medical use of biotechnology (1994), the identity of sperm donors shall be kept secret. The decision has been arrived at after weighing the interests of all parties. Anonymity is in the interest of the sperm donor and his family. Anonymity of the sperm donor is considered to be the most efficient way of avoiding the creation of emotional or legal bonds between the child and the sperm donor, which is in the best interests of the child. Finally, full anonymity for the donor is also in the interests of the legal/social father. (Reference is made to the Committee's comments to the initial report, paragraph 10.)

133. Amendments to the Children Act were adopted in 1997. According to the amendment, the husband of the mother is no longer automatically presumed to be the father if the couple were legally separated at the time of the birth. Since new and more reliable methods of determining paternity are now available, the conditions for pronouncing judgement in paternity cases set out in section 9 of the Children Act have been amended. A man who is identified as the father on the basis of a DNA analysis shall be adjudged to be the father.

134. If paternity has been acknowledged, or the legal father is the man to whom the mother is married, a paternity case may be brought before a court by the mother, the child, the father or the man who claims to be the biological father, if the plaintiff can produce information indicating that someone else than the legal father may be the biological father. The case must be brought before the court within a period of one year after the plaintiff received this information. The man who claims to be the biological father may only bring the case to court until the child is three years old. (Reference is made to paragraphs 131 to 138 and 141 to 144 in Norway's initial report and to paragraph 17 in the Committee's comments to the initial report.)

B. Preservation of identity (art. 8)

135. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 131-136.

C. Freedom of expression (art. 13)

136. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 137-140.

D. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)

137. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 149-153.

138. A new common curriculum for the subject "Religions, Knowledge and Ethical Education" has recently been adopted by the Storting*. A pupil may be exempted from parts of the teaching if the parents apply in writing for such exemption on the grounds that these parts involve the practice of a religion

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* The Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act.

or support for a particular philosophy of life. A pupil who has reached the age of 15 may himself or herself apply for exemption. In such cases, the school has a duty to try to arrange differentiated teaching during these particular lessons.

139. The rights and obligations provided by the exemption rule concerning elements of the teaching programme and differentiated teaching should be interpreted and practised in accordance with binding international agreements to which Norway is a party. Thus, no one should be forced to receive instruction which is in conflict with their own religious or ethical convictions. Nor should the subject contain any elements of indoctrination or preaching. Consequently, the education programme should not promote one particular faith or philosophy of life. However, international agreements do not preclude obligatory teaching about religions and on the general history of religion and ethics.

140. The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs stresses that any request from parents to have their children exempted from obviously religious activities (limited exemption) should be granted. In such cases the parents are not required to state why they wish the exemption. If the parents wish an exemption from more than obviously religious activities, they have to state their reasons. However, it should be taken into account that questions of belief are regarded by many parents as being within the sphere of privacy, and under international human rights conventions the right to privacy is protected.

E. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15)

141. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 154-158.

F. Protection of privacy (art. 16)

142. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 159-161.

G. Access to appropriate information (art. 17)

143. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 141-148.

144. Information about the child welfare services has been drawn up in various languages, directed particularly at children and families with immigrant backgrounds. Together with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is also in the process of adapting information material on parental guidance for parents with immigrant backgrounds.

145. Following the restructuring of the visual media and the mushrooming of a large number of new TV channels and computer-based media, violence in the visual media has been defined as a problem that is increasingly affecting children*. A plan of action against violence in the visual media has been implemented from 1995 (see para. 386).

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* Violence in the media is regulated by the Film and Video Act and the Penal Code.

146. The Government has appointed a board of young people to make recommendations concerning the development of information technology. This is an example of how Norway tries to ensure that young people take part in policy-making at central level. This board deals with questions like access to information, the right to receive free information all over the country and the right of children and young people to receive instruction in the use of new technology. A number of youth information centres have been established in the largest cities. The libraries are also important as distributors of information to children and young people. In cooperation with UNICEF and UNESCO, Norway is planning an international workshop in the beginning of 1999. This will focus on questions regarding articles 13 and 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

H. The right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37 (a))

147. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 162-165 and to paragraph 15 of Norway's reply submitted on 2 August 1996 to the Committee's comments to the initial report.

VI. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE (arts. 5; 18, paras. 1-2; 19-21; 25; 27, para. 4; 39; arts. 9, 10 and 11)

148. Reference is made to paragraph 166 in Norway's initial report.

A. Single parents

149. In 1995, 120,000 children aged 0-15 years (i.e. 13 per cent of all children in this age range) were living with a single parent. On average, this group scores low on socio-economic indicators, but living conditions vary widely within the group. Around 30 per cent of single parents received social security, while the corresponding figure for two-parent families was 6 per cent. In 1995, 67 per cent of the single parents were employed, as compared with approximately 85 per cent of the adults in two-parent families. One-parent families account for about one fifth of all Norwegian families with children, and a number of economic measures have been directed at this group in order to alleviate their situation.

B. Parental guidance (art. 5)

150. Guidance and support for parents are offered through different channels and are integrated into the general health and social services. The municipal mother and child health (MCH) clinics play a particularly important role in this regard (reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 167-173, and to paragraph 310 of this report).

151. Family counselling is provided by the Family Counselling Offices, of which there are 62 located throughout the country. This service is available in all the counties, and the agencies are organized as independent bodies providing assistance to families with relational problems. Half of the agencies are run by the Church, and half by the municipalities or counties.

152. A National Parental Guidance Programme was launched in 1995. The objective of the programme is to establish meeting-places where parents can exchange views and discuss issues related to raising children. This strengthens the parents' role and prevents mental and social problems among children and adolescents. Particular emphasis is placed on promoting communication and social skills that encourage a mutually beneficial relationship between parents and children and between parents and professionals.

C. Parental responsibility (art. 18, paras. 1-2)

153. The Children's Act of 1981 regulates parental responsibility, permanent place of residence and the child's right of access to both parents. (Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 175-193). The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is aware of the fact that the Joint Custody Association of Norway submitted a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on 7 April 1997. The report includes the question of parental responsibility and the child's right to have access to both parents.

154. Agreements between parents regarding parental responsibility, permanent place of residence and the child's right of access to both parents may now be submitted for approval to the County Governor, pursuant to the amendment to the Children Act of 13 June 1997. This means that these agreements can be enforced, which was not the case previously. The County Governor must take into account the best interest of the child when taking a decision. If the agreement is not in the child's best interest, approval will be denied. The County Governor's Office normally handles the required procedures more quickly than the courts, at no cost to the parties.

155. If one of the parents prevents the other from exercising his/her right of access, this right may be enforced by a coercive fee. According to the amended Act, the enforcement officer collects the coercive fee if this is requested by one of the parents. The usual fee required by the Court of Enforcement does not apply in cases regarding the right of access.

156. A parent with sole parental responsibility has the right to move with the child to another country. The other parent's opinion should, however, be taken into consideration before such a decision is taken. If the parents share parental responsibility, both of them must consent to the child moving abroad.

157. The parent must bear the travelling expenses incurred in connection with exercising his or her right of access. However, the court or the County Governor may decide that the travelling expenses should be shared by the parents, or that the other parent should bear the expenses.

D. Separation from parents (art. 9)

158. Concerning the right of a child to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents in cases where they live with one of the parents, reference is made to paragraphs 153-157 of this report and to paragraphs 201-216 of Norway's initial report.

E. Family reunification (art. 10)

159. The Immigration Act and the amended Immigration Regulations contain extensive provisions regarding family reunification. The closest family members (normally children, parents and spouse) of a foreign national who is granted lawful residence with a settlement permit or a work/residence permit that may constitute a basis for a settlement permit, have on application the right to a work/residence permit.

160. If the principal person has been granted asylum or a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, this is extended unconditionally to the spouse and children, or, if the principal person is a child, to the parents and unmarried sisters and brothers under the age of 18 who are living together with the parents. All the applicants must live together with the child.

161. If the principal person has not been granted asylum or a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, it is a prerequisite that subsistence is ensured, unless the principal person has been granted a settlement permit (normally after three years of continuous residence in Norway with a permit without restrictions).

162. Applications for a work/residence permit in Norway for the purpose of family reunification have to be submitted from abroad (the nearest Norwegian foreign service mission). The Directorate of Immigration decides upon the applications in the first instance, and in this process inquiries may be made of the family in Norway. The police are responsible for interviews. If an application is rejected, an appeal may be submitted to the Ministry of Justice.

163. As regards processing time, applications from children or from parents seeking to be reunited with their children are given high priority at all levels. In cases where the parents and the child reside in different countries and family reunification does not take place, short-term visitor's visas for a maximum period of three months may be issued (if a visa is required) so that the family members may maintain personal relations. In general, a visa applicant must remain outside Norway for six months before a new visitor's visa will be granted.

164. In general, a foreign citizen in Norway is free to leave the country to visit family abroad, including in his/her home country. (An exception is made when a visit to the home country is deemed incompatible with the alien's residence status in Norway, for example when the alien has status as a refugee due to persecution or the risk of persecution in his home country. However, in these cases family members will be granted a visitor's visa for Norway.) A person with a settlement permit may stay abroad for a period of up to two years without losing his permit.

165. In 1996, 1,339 children aged 0-11 years, 455 aged 11-15 years and 559 aged 16-19 years were involved in family reunification cases.

F. Illicit transfer and non-return (art. 11)

166. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 232-235. Reference is also made to paragraph 73 of this report, concerning the new Passport Act.

167. In 1996, Norway received 28 applications pursuant to the Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction of 25 October 1980 and the European Convention on Recognition and Implementation of Decisions concerning Parental Responsibility and Recovery of Parental Responsibility of 25 May 1980. Among these cases were applications to secure the exercise of rights of access.

168. The number of children abducted from Norway is almost equal to the number of children abducted to the country. In about 70 per cent of the abductions from Norway (1996 figures), the mother of the child was the abductor. The abducted child was in most cases under 10 years old. About 20 per cent of the cases in 1996 were solved voluntarily. Some cases are solved within a few weeks. The most common reason for delay is the use of oral hearings in the courts, in particular if the decision is appealed. The cases are usually solved in accordance with the objectives of the conventions mentioned in the paragraph above.

169. Norway has entered a reservation to article 42 of the Hague Convention, as provided for in article 26, third paragraph. The applicant's legal costs may be covered through the Norwegian free legal aid system. Free legal aid may in these cases be granted to those whose capital and income are below certain specified limits.

G. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27, para. 4)

170. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 194-200.

171. The State provides advance maintenance payments for children who are not living with both parents. The advance payment - as from 1 June 1997 NKr 1,050 per month per child - must be refunded by the parent without custody. If paternity has not been established, or if the parent without custody is not financially able to pay an equivalent amount, the advance payment is provided as a benefit.

172. The recovery of maintenance payments in Norway has been improved and is now fairly efficient. The recovery of maintenance payments from debtors resident in other countries is, however, less satisfactory. The results vary considerably between countries, even between countries which are parties to international conventions aimed at facilitating cross-border recovery. Norway is currently investigating the possibility of improving the recovery rate from abroad through bilateral contacts.

173. A general rule applies in regard to maintenance payments: unless otherwise agreed between the parties, payments shall correspond to 11 per cent of the contributor's gross income for one child, 18 per cent for two children,

24 per cent for three children and 28 per cent for four or more children. The issue of maintenance payments has been subject to considerable debate for several years and is currently under revision.

H. Children deprived of their family environment (art. 20)

174. According to the Act relating to child welfare services, it is a public responsibility to ensure the establishment of various care measures that are adapted to children's needs. The most common of these measures are foster homes, emergency homes and various types of institutions, such as emergency/short-term institutions, long-term institutions and institutions for parents and children.

175. In Norway, 80 per cent of the children who are placed outside their biological family homes live in foster homes. The remaining 20 per cent are placed in institutions. Decisions on placement are based on the best interest of the child, his or her personality and the need for care in a stable environment. As a result of increased contact between the child welfare system and children and families with an immigrant background, the need for more varied care measures has become increasingly pressing.

Child welfare statistics

176. The number of children covered by child welfare measures increased considerably in the early 1990s, largely as the result of the channelling of increased resources through the National Development Programme for child welfare (see paras. 35-41). The backlog of previously untreated cases was eliminated and greater opportunities were provided to conduct investigations, clarify needs and provide service for children and their families. The total number of child welfare cases has, however, continued to increase somewhat since the termination of the programme in 1993. This is due to the increased use of measures for children who are still living with their biological families. The number of children and adolescents being placed outside their biological families has been gradually reduced in recent years. Despite the increase in the number of cases, only 2 to 3 per cent of all children receive child-care measures at any given time.

177. By the end of 1995, 21,142 children were registered as recipients of child welfare measures. Of these, approximately 75 per cent received assistance while still living with their parents. Approximately 25 per cent, i.e. 5,095 children, were placed outside their homes, of whom 4,200 were in foster homes, 400 in children's or youth homes and 450 in other types of institutions. In 1995, children receiving child welfare measures constituted 27.8 per 1,000 of all children in Norway; 31.1 per 1,000 were boys and 25.2 per 1,000 were girls.

I. Adoption (art. 21)

178. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 222-231.

179. The number of adoptions has been relatively stable since the early 1980s, at around 800-900 per year. In 1995, approximately 600 children of the total number of 900 were adopted from a foreign country. The majority of domestic adoptions were adoptions of a stepchild.

180. The Norwegian authorities follow the provisions of the Hague Convention of 23 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption in matters relating to international adoption. The Convention was ratified by Norway in 1997 and entered into force on 1 January 1998.

181. The ratification of the Hague Convention has not necessitated any amendments to the Norwegian legislation that was in force at the time of the ratification. Marginal changes in administrative routines have been the only consequences of ratification. The Norwegian system ensures strict and thorough administrative procedures with regard to advance consent to adoption from another country.

182. A discussion on different aspects of domestic and international adoption was recently initiated. A particular issue in this discussion has been the legal regulation of adoption, in particular international adoption. This and related matters will be the subject of a public hearing in 1998. A systematic review has been made of existing knowledge and experience of international adoptions for the further improvement of adoption routines. An assessment of the role of the County Governors in domestic adoptions has also been carried out, and a discussion has begun on the current guidelines for adoption. Various information measures directed at the parties in adoption cases have been initiated.

183. According to the Adoption Act, an adopted child has the right to information about his or her biological parents on attaining the age of 18. A judgement in 1995 confirmed that this right also applies to adoptions that were carried out before the current Adoption Act of 1986 was passed.

184. Parents who adopt have, with minor exceptions, the same social security rights and leave rights as biological parents. The costs related to the adoption itself must, however, be borne by the new parents. Families who adopt children from abroad receive a lump sum grant of NKr 22,000 per child (1998).

185. Amendments to the Citizen Act are currently under consideration, and may have consequences for adopted children who are not Norwegian nationals. These amendments may give these children Norwegian nationality more quickly and automatically than previously (see para. 131).

J. Periodic review of placement (art. 25)

186. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 251-255.

187. In 1996, a trial project on internal control in child welfare institutions in four counties was implemented. The objective of the project was to improve the quality of the supervision, legal protection, and

conditions for both residents and staff. A joint standard for the internal control system has been developed for the four counties. A report on the project will be made available to all the counties in 1998.

K. Abuse and neglect (art. 19), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

188. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 236 and 238-250.

189. Civil servants and relevant professional groups, except for priests, have a statutory duty to report to the child welfare service any suspicions they may have with regard to abuse or neglect. In the Act relating to child welfare services, this is described as any situation indicating that a child is being abused or neglected at home, or when a child has shown consistent and serious behaviour disorders. Private organizations and individuals who work for the State, the counties or the municipal authorities are also obliged to report to the child care-service. Medical doctors, psychologists, dentists, nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and other health professionals* all have a duty to report as described above. Comprehensive further education measures have been implemented for employees in the child welfare service, especially in relation to the investigation procedures.

190. According to the Day Care Institutions Act (1995), a certificate of good conduct from the police is mandatory for anyone who is employed to work in a day-care centre. Persons who have been charged with, prosecuted for or sentenced for sexual violations against children are, according to the provisions of the Act, prohibited from working in a day-care centre. An amendment to the Act relating to child welfare services that will introduce a corresponding mandatory certificate for employees in child welfare institutions and for foster parents has been proposed.

191. Some researchers claim that approximately 5 per cent of all children have experienced sexual abuse before they reach the age of 18 (reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 238 and to chapter VII in the present report), while others have suggested higher figures. The majority of abused children are girls. No surveys on other forms of abuse or neglect have been undertaken. Recently there has been a greater focus on the problem of children with parents who use drugs (see paras. 378-379). With regard to child labour, reference is made to chapter II in Norway's initial report and to paragraph 60 of the present report.

192. A report to the Storting on sexual abuse of children (see para. 381) was presented in 1993, which emphasizes the importance of increasing the level of expertise among relevant professional groups and to improving the coordination of services. Cross-disciplinary training and further education on sexual abuse in children have been implemented in all counties. A National Resource Centre for Sexually Abused Children has been established (see para. 381).

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* Regulated by the Municipal Health Act, the Hospital Act, the Family Care Act and the Marriage Act.

193. In recent years, efforts have been made to improve services available to children and adolescents with serious behaviour disorders. In the long-term programme for 1998-2001, the Government decided to formulate a plan of action specifically for this group. The plan, presented in 1997, aimed at improving these services through the further development of institutions and other measures, developing advisory services at county level, clarifying areas of responsibility, improving collaboration between the administrative levels, implementing research, and raising the level of expertise in these services.

194. Since their inception in Bergen (Norway's second largest city) in 1986, child welfare emergency teams have been organized in a number of municipalities, primarily in the largest cities. A fundamental idea underlying this model was to develop a close collaboration between the child welfare services and the police. In some cities, this is organized through a 24-hour service which is run by a team of child welfare workers and is situated at the main police station. After more than 10 years of experience, local evaluations indicate that the model has an important preventive effect by involving the child welfare services at an early stage.

195. Confidential helplines have been organized, where children can ring up and talk about abuse and neglect. Most of these services are offered on a voluntary basis, and they have varying degrees of public funding. The Wanda Centre (see para. 379) and the helpline for children and adolescents (see para. 48) are targeted specifically towards children, while other services target the population in general, including children.

VII. BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE
(arts. 6, 18, paras. 3, 23, 24, 26, 27, paras. 1-3)

A. Disabled children (art. 23)

196. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 288 and 289.

197. One important result of the first plan of action for people with disabilities (1990-1993) was the appointment of a committee of State secretaries to monitor policy on disability, to strengthen the coordination between different ministries and to follow up with a second plan of action (1994-1997). In general, the measures in the second plan are intended to improve the opportunities for disabled people to participate fully and equally in everyday life. A revised plan of action will be launched during 1998.

198. Parallel to the reform for the mentally disabled, a comprehensive restructuring of special schools has taken place. Most of these schools have been transformed into 20 resource centres. Thirteen of these are national centres, specializing in different fields, like sight, hearing, language/communication, social and emotional difficulties. Seven of the centres are regional and these have specialized in complex learning disabilities.

199. The main purpose of the resource centres is to develop educational expertise for children with particular needs, to disseminate information and specialized knowledge through guidance and counselling, to offer courses and further education, and to conduct research and development.

200. In addition to the 20 resource centres, there are four national resource centres with functions that are related to the mentally disabled. These centres have specialized in physical rehabilitation, autism and diagnosis.

201. NKr 3 million was allocated in 1997 to arrange physical activities for the disabled and to establish sports schools for the mentally disabled. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs will continue these measures in order to achieve the goal of full participation and equality for the disabled. Summer games for the mentally disabled have been arranged every year since 1967 and attracted 700 participants in 1997.

202. According to the Day Care Institution's Act (1995), children with disabilities must be given priority in admissions to day-care institutions subject to an expert recommendation that the child will benefit from attending. The expert assessment has to be undertaken in consultation with the parents, who take the final decision. The Act of 1995 has strengthened the rights of disabled children in this respect, and in 1997, most children with disabilities attended day-care institutions.

B. Health and health services (art. 24)

203. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 298-303.

204. In 1994, expenditure on health and health services in Norway amounted to 7.3 per cent of GDP, of which 6.9 per cent was public expenditure. The figure for public expenditure is relatively high compared to other European (EU) countries, while the total expenditure (including private expenditure) is somewhat below the European (EU) average. The cost of health and social service (including the national insurance scheme) amounted in 1994 to approximately NKr 5,800 per inhabitant.

205. The public health system in Norway ensures that access to facilities for treatment and rehabilitation is universal and based on medical needs. All children and adolescents requiring hospital treatment receive this free of charge.

206. All pregnant women have access to prenatal and post-natal health care, and to hospital for delivery. In 1996, there were 61,185 births, of which 268 took place at home. Women can choose to give birth at home with the assistance of a midwife, but only a small number of midwives are available for such deliveries. The municipalities are not required to incorporate such a service in the municipal health service.

Health statistics

207. A number of different agencies and institutions are responsible for health statistics in Norway. The most important of these are as follows:

(a) Statistics Norway: general statistics on health and health personnel, population surveys, national register on mortality and causes of death;

(b) University of Bergen: The National Birth Register;

(c) National Register of Hospital Research: somatic and psychiatric hospitals in Norway;

(d) National Institute of Public Health: disease surveillance, particularly communicable diseases. The Institute is also responsible for the National Injury Register and will start risk surveillance of newborn children;

(e) The Cancer Registry.

In addition, some of the larger hospitals are responsible for the registration of different medical procedures.

Plan of action to reduce infant mortality (para. 2 (a))

208. The following table shows trends in infant mortality:

	Deaths per 1 000 live births	
	0 - 4 weeks	birth - 1 year
1976-80	5.9	9.0
1981-85	4.6	8.1
1986-90	4.2	7.8
1988	4.5	8.0
1989	3.9	7.8
1990	3.9	6.9
1991	3.7	6.2
1992	3.8	5.8
1993	3.5	5.0
1994		5.2
1995		4.0
1996		4.0

Source: Statistics Norway.

209. A plan of action to reduce infant mortality was adopted in 1991 and implemented as from 1992. Sudden infant death from unknown causes (cot deaths) have been reduced the most. A research programme on cot deaths and infant mortality (1992-1996) has been carried out under the auspices of the Research Council of Norway. Extra grants have been given to the hospitals with the highest number of premature children and infants most in need of nursing NKr 20 million). NKr 13 million was allocated to development projects

in the municipalities and to national projects within the framework of the plan of action. These grants were given in the period 1992-1995. The number of cot deaths is given below:

Year	Number of deaths
1989	142
1991	74
1993	37
1994	34
1995	41 (0.7 per 1 000 births)

210. An evaluation of the projects that have been carried out following the plan of action concluded that most of the projects have helped to strengthen the services offered by the mother and child health (MCH) clinics and the midwives. The projects judged to be most successful dealt with collaboration in various forms.

211. Municipal midwife services are mandatory pursuant to the Municipal Health Care Act. The midwife provides advice on family planning together with a physician at MCH clinics and at doctors' surgeries that are attached to the municipal health service.

212. Primary health care in the municipalities is of paramount importance in ensuring that children receive the necessary medical assistance and health care, including the diagnosis of ailments that require hospital treatment. Pursuant to the Municipal Health Care Act of 1982 these services comprise ordinary doctors' surgeries, physiotherapy, midwifery, community nursing, school health services and MCH clinics. The municipalities have 24-hour emergency medical services which in many municipalities are the result of inter-municipal cooperation.

213. The fact that the primary health-care system is municipal ensures access to these services throughout the country. Although topographical features and variations in population density in the 452 municipalities do create differences with regard to access, these are largely a matter of travelling distance and not of quality.

214. For children above the age of seven, a consultation fee is charged, which is the same as for adults. For physicians within the public health system, this fee represents partial payment. If the total cost of health services for a child in one calendar year exceeds NKr 240, the surplus is refunded through the national insurance system.

215. The following table gives personnel statistics for the municipal health service, 1996:

	Per 10 000 inhabitants	Per 10 000 births	Per 10 000 children	Range (highest and lowest county level)
All professions	18.8			23.8-15.2
Medical doctors	7.5			11.1- 6.3
Physiotherapists	7.3			10.2- 5.1
Midwives		36.7		80.4-19.4
Health visitors (1995)			49.6	62.2-36.2

Source: Statistics Norway.

All the figures given in the table have shown a moderate upward trend during the last 10 years.

216. Babies and infants are offered five examinations by a doctor, in addition to examinations by a public health nurse. Municipal MCH clinics are easily accessible, and they are consulted by almost 100 per cent of those who are eligible. Home visits are a priority area for public health nurses, so that contact can be made with those families that, for some reason or another, do not attend the clinics. MCH clinics are also responsible for coordinating measures for disabled children and pre-schoolchildren who have a need for special services.

Universal immunization system

217. The following table shows the vaccinations that are offered to infants and babies by MCH clinics:

Age of the child	Vaccination against
3 months	Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, Hib (Haemophilus influenza B) and poliomyelitis
5 months	Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, Hib and poliomyelitis
11-12 months	Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, Hib and poliomyelitis
15 months	MMR (Measles, mumps, rubella)
6 years (school)	Poliomyelitis
11-12 years	Diphtheria, tetanus
12-13 years	MMR
13-15 years	BCG and poliomyelitis

218. The BCG vaccination ceased to be mandatory as from 1 January 1997. Boosters for all of these vaccinations are administered in the primary and lower secondary school. Vaccination against tuberculosis is offered to children in grade 5.

219. Small children and schoolchildren are among the healthiest groups in the population. The pronounced reduction in cot deaths in recent years has contributed substantially to reducing infant mortality (see para. 209). The prevalence of a number of childhood diseases has been reduced due to the vaccination programmes, for instance against polio and Hib. Following the reduction in infectious diseases, increased attention has been paid to psychosocial problems among children and adolescents, i.e. conditions like eating disorders, maladjustment, increasing tendency to use violence, bullying and general failure to thrive.

Eating disorders

220. In Norway it is estimated that between 25,000 and 35,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 25 suffer from anorexia nervosa and/or bulimia nervosa. This constitutes 4-6 per cent of the children and youth population in this same age group. Two point five per cent of girls and 0.9 per cent of boys in upper secondary school were found by the "Ungkost" research programme (1993) to have been treated for some kind of eating disorder (74 per cent of those who reported they were treated for eating disorders were girls, 26 per cent were boys). Corresponding percentages for grade 7 were lower: 0.6 per cent and 0.3 per cent (67 per cent of those who reported they were treated for eating disorders were girls, 33 per cent were boys). Six point two per cent of girls and 3.7 per cent of boys would have appreciated professional help to cope with their eating disorder. It is important to stress that this research does not indicate the exact number of young people suffering from eating disorders. These figures, however, confirm the assumption that many young people have a complicated relationship to their body and weight and to food.

221. In Norway the prevention of eating disorders has been a medical and political issue for some years. A nationwide educational programme was introduced in 1993, focusing on a prevention model. This educational programme is now undergoing revision and is being developed with a more general approach. It is now addressing issues like self-esteem, self-assertion, positive and negative coping strategies, stress management and puberty-related problems.

Undernourishment and malnutrition

222. Five per cent of the Norwegian population are immigrants. In recent years, a number of immigrants have come from countries in the third world where undernourishment and malnutrition are prevalent, and immigrant children have been admitted to hospital with deficiency diseases like rachitis (due to lack of Vitamin D) and anaemia (lack of iron). It is thought that not all children with such deficiencies are diagnosed.

223. There is no survey of diet and related health problems among immigrants to Norway, but a few small-scale diet surveys have been conducted among

children with Turkish, Pakistani and Somali backgrounds. These surveys have indicated that 90-100 per cent of the children in these groups were given Vitamin D supplements, i.e. a larger proportion than the corresponding Norwegian child population. The surveys also revealed that 9 per cent of Turkish and Somali one-year-olds and 25 per cent of Pakistani one-year-olds had anaemia due to iron deficiency. The level of iron was in general low among the surveyed children.

224. The National Nutrition Council is in the process of planning a survey of diet and nourishment among children with Norwegian and immigrant backgrounds (1997-1999). There is a recognized need for further development of the advice given to immigrants at the MCH clinics on these issues.

Mother and child health clinics (para. 2)

225. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 304-307 and to paragraph 216 of the present report.

School health services (para. 2)

226. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 309-311.

Family planning (para. 2 (f))

227. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 313.

228. Family planning is part of the syllabus in grade 10, in lower secondary school.

229. With regard to abortion, reference is made to paragraph 314 of Norway's initial report. The abortion figures have been relatively stable since the Termination of Pregnancy Act entered into force (1979), with declining figures since 1984. The number of abortions has been reduced in all age categories, although the reduction among the youngest, i.e. between 15 and 19 years of age, has been less pronounced.

230. A report on experiences of the Termination of Pregnancy Act was presented to the Storting on 15 December 1995. The reduction in the rate of abortions has coincided with intensified preventive efforts. A plan of action to reduce the number of abortions was implemented in 1991-1994.

231. The plan of action 1995-1998 for the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and abortions follows the previous plan. Evaluations of previous efforts have shown that prevention strategies tailored to fit well-defined target groups are the most efficient, and this has influenced the strategy for the present plan of action. Most efforts have now been targeted at young people in the counties with the highest abortion figures.

232. In 1997, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs will carry out a project involving free distribution of contraceptives to women below 25 years of age in selected municipalities. The main aims of the project are to

increase the availability of contraceptive pills for young women, to increase confidence in contraceptive pills and to improve information and guidance about sexuality and contraception.

HIV/AIDS and prevention

233. As of 31 December 1996, there were 1,686 registered HIV-positive individuals in Norway, the majority of whom were men (approximately 75 per cent). Approximately 50 per cent lived in the capital, but by 1996 cases had been registered in every county. The cumulative rate per 100,000 inhabitants varied between counties, from 1.8 (Sogn og Fjordane) to 176.6 (Oslo). Twelve children (0.7 per cent of HIV-positive individuals) were registered as having been infected by their mothers during birth, i.e. from 0 to 3 cases every year since 1986. The transmission rate from mother to child is estimated to be around 8 per cent in Norway. This reduction from a previous 20 per cent is due to improved medical treatment.

234. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has recently put forward and is now implementing the third plan of action in this field for the period 1996-2000 in cooperation with the Norwegian Board of Health and the National Institute of Public Health. This plan of action sets out the same framework and scope of activities as former plans and builds on cooperation with the NGOs representing high-risk groups and people living with HIV and AIDS.

Traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children (para. 3)

235. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 320.

236. An act prohibiting circumcision of women was adopted on 30 June 1995. The Norwegian Board of Health has formulated guidelines for health personnel covering the medical and legal aspects of the problem.

237. According to amendments to section 16 of the Marriage Act passed by the Storting on 24 June 1994 each of the spouses can initiate proceedings to have the marriage declared null and void if he or she has been forced into contracting marriage. A person who forces anyone into contracting a marriage can be prosecuted according to section 222 of the Penal Code. It does occur that a girl is taken against her will to the country of origin (often the parents' country of origin) to be married, but we know little about the extent of the problem and how it affects the lives of young girls with immigrant backgrounds. Boys with an immigrant background are also forced into marriage, but there is so far little knowledge of the extent of this practice. Under the plan of action for children and adolescents with immigrant backgrounds (see para. 43), a research project on forced marriages among children with immigrant backgrounds was started in 1997.

The needs of developing countries and international cooperation regarding children and health standards (para. 4)

238. The strategy for Norwegian development assistance to children was adopted in 1992. One of the targets for this strategy was that bilateral development assistance should focus more on children's needs. Norway has chosen to target areas of particular importance for children, especially

health and nutrition. Most of the contributions are channelled through international organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Norway places special emphasis on the development of primary health services and services aimed at mothers and children. Norway's total budget for bilateral and multilateral development assistance in 1996 was NKr 8,472 million, approximately 1 per cent of GDP. Of this, 9 per cent (NKr 536 million) was allocated to the health sector and 6 per cent (NKr 361 million) to the social sector.

239. In 1993, NORAD (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) drew up a plan for implementing the strategy for children adopted in 1992. This plan emphasizes a more precisely targeted process for integrating children into development assistance. The objective is to target support for the social sector (health and education) more specifically towards children, particularly girls. The plan mentions NGOs and the Norwegian Volunteer Service as particularly suitable channels for assistance to children.

240. With regard to bilateral development assistance in the field of health and nutrition, children benefit mainly from support for primary health care, including family planning. Specifically, child-related Norwegian assistance in the health sector is also carried out in a number of programme countries in both Asia and Africa.

241. Groups of children at risk have long been given priority by NGOs and the Norwegian Volunteer Service, and support for a number of projects for specially vulnerable groups of children has been channelled through these organizations. A substantial part of the programme agreement between NORAD and Norwegian Save the Children, which totals NKr 65 million, is devoted to helping these groups. Other organizations such as the Norwegian Association of the Disabled, Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, the Salvation Army, and the Norwegian School Agency for International Development and Cooperation also run projects for street children, children with AIDS and/or disabled children.

242. The NGOs that receive public grants have estimated that three quarters of the allocations are given to projects focusing on children, a quarter of which are directly targeted at children. The projects supported by Norwegian organizations are mainly concerned with health and education measures. In addition to the building and rehabilitation of schools, these include supplying equipment, educational programmes, financing of teachers and institution-building.

243. About 35 per cent of the funds of the Norwegian Volunteer Service are directly targeted at children or adolescents below the age of 18. The Volunteer Service has invested in measures targeted at children orphaned by AIDS and traumatized children, and areas such as mother and child health, nutrition, and the physically and mentally disabled.

244. At the multilateral level, Norway's support for mother and child health is primarily channelled through UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and the multilateral banks. FAO and WFP are important for improving children's nutrition. The majority of multi-bilateral assistance to UNICEF had been devoted to measures in the health sector. In the last few years measures to combat AIDS have been given

greater priority. Since the World Summit for Children, WHO has given greater emphasis to measures targeted at children: the expanded programme of immunization, control of diarrhoeal diseases, active respiratory infections, programme for women's health and, since 1993, the Integrated Management of the Sick Child initiative.

Plan of action for the improvement of mental health care and mental health

245. From 1990 the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has implemented a series of measures with the aim of strengthening child and adolescent psychiatric health care as well as mental health in general, and in 1991 a plan of action for psychiatric health care and mental health was started. In 1997 the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs submitted a report to the Storting regarding psychiatry and in 1998, the Ministry will step up the process of expanding the necessary services for the mentally ill.

246. The child and adolescent psychiatric services have grown during the last 10 years, and the proportion of the child population that received some form of service has increased from 1 per cent in 1987 to 1.95 per cent in 1995. The number of man years has doubled, from 900 to approximately 1,800 in the same time period. Psychiatric centres for children and adolescents have been established in three out of five health regions, and certain centre functions have also been established in the remaining two regions. A further expansion of these services is needed and will be carried out in the near future.

Prevention of injuries at home, at school and during leisure time

247. A plan of action to prevent injuries at home and school and in connection with recreation will be implemented from 1997 to 2002, involving nine ministries. Among the targets for the plan is the prevention of injuries at school, in day-care centres and in playgrounds.

248. In addition to the plan of action, legislation and information are the main preventive measures against injuries caused by various products. The Product Control Act provides for general safety measures and regulations pursuant to the Act have been laid down for specific product areas, e.g. toys, inflammatory properties of clothing, personal protective equipment, skateboards, etc. Manufacturers, importers and retailers of toys, child-care products, etc. are required to follow these regulations.

249. In 1996, the Government adopted regulations on the safety of playground equipment, which regulates safety aspects of the design and installation of the equipment, and for the foundations on which it is installed. These regulations present a breakthrough with regard to the safety of children's physical environment, which is now more in harmony with the safety considerations at adults' workplaces.

Road traffic safety

250. Road traffic is a serious threat to children's lives and health. In 1995, 13 children between the ages of 0 and 6 were killed as the result of road traffic accidents. The corresponding figure for the age category 7 to

14 was 6. The figures for fatal road accidents have declined for the population in general from the mid-1980s. According to police statistics around 1,000 children are injured in traffic accidents each year. In half of these accidents, children were either bicycling or walking. Accidents on the road to school account for between 10 and 20 per cent of accidents involving children.

251. The protect school roads programme, which was started in 1979, has provided funds for physical protection measures on county and municipal roads in the local environment. Since 1995, the programme has been integrated into the general traffic safety measures.

Pollution and environmental problems

252. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 328.

253. In 1997, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs presented its plan of action for the prevention of asthma, allergy and indoor climate diseases. This plan follows on from the plan of action for a good indoor climate 1993-1996, and will draw on the experience gained from the first plan. Its main targets are to increase knowledge about important risk factors causing asthma, allergy and indoor climate diseases in the general population, how to achieve good indoor climates in schools and day-care institutions, and how to reduce outdoor pollution from various sources.

Limit values for local air pollution and noise

254. People living in densely populated areas, particularly in larger cities, are exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution and noise. Children and adolescents are among the groups which are specially vulnerable to air pollution. To reduce these problems the Norwegian Government introduced regulations pursuant to the Pollution Control Act with binding threshold limit values for local air quality and noise on 30 May 1997. Transport is the most important source of local air pollution and noise, and the new regulations apply to transport pollution as well as other kinds of pollution.

255. This is the first example in Norwegian environmental policy of binding threshold limit values for environmental pollution. In order to gain more knowledge about the air quality in local environments, the polluters in the most polluted areas are being required to register their contributions to air pollution and noise. This will be an important contribution to surveys of children's and adolescents' physical environment, especially in cities and other densely populated areas. Several municipalities already have systems for controlling air pollution, which now can be further developed.

C. Social security and child-care services and facilities (arts. 26 and 18, para. 3)

256. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 331-356. Where the measures mentioned in the initial report have been adjusted, new

information is given in this report*. With regard to benefits to single parents (unmarried, divorced or separated), reference is made to paragraph 270 of this report.

Family allowance

257. Family allowances are paid for children under 16 years of age who are domiciled in Norway. Children are considered to be domiciled in Norway if they live here for more than 12 months. As a rule the children of asylum seekers or refugees are considered residents, and the allowance applies from the day after a decision is made to grant asylum or a residence permit. The allowance is paid to the breadwinner or carer. Those having the everyday care of the child are considered to be the carers.

258. Family allowance rates increased by 40 per cent (real growth) from 1986 to 1992. As from 1992, the rates have been kept stable and increased to compensate for inflation. In 1997, family allowance payments amounted to approximately NKr 12.8 billion. Altogether 919,439 children were entitled to family allowances in 1997 (main figures). The rates are given below (kroner).

1 child	11 112
2 children	22 740
3 children	35 832
4 children	49 572
5 children	63 708
For each additional child	14 136

259. Single providers are entitled to an allowance for one more child than they actually have (extra allowance).

260. In 1997 an annual supplement (infant allowance) of NKr 7,884 is paid for children between the ages of 1 and 3. Single parents with children between the age of 0 and 3 are entitled pursuant to the Family Allowance Act to an allowance for one child more than they actually provide for and in addition to full transitional benefit pursuant to the National Insurance Act, and from 1998 to an extra annual supplement of NKr 7,884.

261. In 1997, the supplement for recipients of family allowance residing in the county of Finnmark and in certain municipalities in the county of Nord-Troms amounted to NKr 3,792 for each child.

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* The entitlement to social insurance benefits is laid down in the National Insurance Act, No. 19 of 28 February 1997 (which has replaced the Act of 16 June 1966).

Other child-care benefits

262. An attendance benefit is granted to persons in need of extra attendance due to a disability. The benefit is granted regardless of whether or not there is a paid attendant. However, the need for extra attendance must be such that a paid attendant would have received a salary at least equal to the benefit. The standard benefit in 1998 is NKr 10,536 per year.

263. Various technical aids are provided to help overcome the effects of a disability and a basic benefit is granted to cover extra expenses due to the disability. The extra expenses must exceed a minimum level which corresponds to the lowest benefit rate.

264. Supplements are paid to a person on disability or old age pension when they support a child under the age of 18. The supplement is calculated on the basis of the pensioner's period of pension accruement (period of residence in Norway) and is means-tested. The full supplement is NKr 10,625 a year (1 January 1998).

265. Children's pensions are granted to children who have lost one or both parents (general age limit: 18 years). The pensions are calculated on the basis of the parents' period of pension accruement under the National Insurance Scheme (period of residence in Norway and/or income from occupational activity and paid contributions).

Parental leave

266. An insured woman who has worked for 6 out of 10 months preceding confinement is entitled to daily cash benefits (amounting to 100 per cent of her earnings) for 42 weeks (210 days) as maternity leave. If the parent's income is over six times the national insurance basic amount, parental or adoption benefits do not cover the excess amount. The period of paid leave may be prolonged to 52 weeks (260 days) at a reduced compensation rate (80 per cent of the woman's earnings). Benefits are payable from 12 weeks before confinement. Three weeks of this maternity leave must be taken by the mother before the confinement and at least six weeks immediately following the confinement. If the mother resumes work before the period of paid maternity leave has elapsed, the father is entitled to daily cash benefits for the remaining period. Four weeks of the total cash benefit period are reserved for the father. A time account scheme makes it possible for employees and self-employed persons who give birth to or adopt children to combine partial maternity/adoption benefits with reduced working hours for a longer period than the normal maternity leave. Parental leave and benefits are continually subject to revision, in order to strengthen the flexibility of the scheme and make sure it meets families' needs.

267. In the case of adoption of children under the age of 15, approximately the same rules apply as to maternity leave. In 1997, the period of leave was 39 weeks with 100 per cent compensation, or 49 weeks with 80 per cent compensation.

268. Leave with pay is also granted when a child is ill. (Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 344 and 345.)

269. There is also a lump-sum maternity benefit for women with limited or no leave entitlement, largely due to having low or no income. In 1997, this benefit amounted to NKr 32,138.

Transitional benefits from the national insurance for single, divorced or separated parents

270. Benefits to single parents (unmarried, divorced or separated) have been subject to a general revision since the previous report. The aim has been to encourage single parents to engage in gainful occupation or to qualify for the labour market through training. This reform involves substantial increases in transitional benefits and benefits to cover the cost of child supervision, and a reduction in the period of entitlement to transitional benefits. As from 1 January 1998 the transitional benefit is NKr 78,625 per year.

Social (economic) assistance

271. According to the Children Act, parents are responsible for supporting their children, in principle until they are 18 years old, but in practice usually until they have completed secondary school (normally at the age of 19). Parents who cannot provide for themselves or their dependants through work or by applying for welfare benefits (such as unemployment benefit), are entitled to social assistance*.

272. The right to social assistance ensures that all legal residents have a minimum standard of living ("safety-net"). The assistance normally covers basic needs such as housing, food, clothing, expenses for health services, dental care and personal hygiene, necessary housing equipment and furniture, local transport costs, newspapers and leisure activities within reason. For children, expenses related to child care and to upper secondary education (primary and lower secondary education is basically free) are also covered. The actual amount paid out is left to the discretion of the municipality, based on national and municipal guidelines and an evaluation of the family's specific needs and the total of its other income or assets.

273. Older children may apply directly for social assistance in special circumstances, i.e. if for some reason they are not receiving the necessary care/economic support from their parents.

274. In 1995, there were 24,800 single parents, mainly women, with children under 18 years receiving social assistance, and 18,700 couples with children under 18 years receiving such assistance. The total number of children under the age of 18 belonging to households receiving social assistance in 1995 was 76,800.

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* The individual's right to such assistance is set out in the Social Services Act of 13 December 1991.

275. Social assistance to the value of NKr 4,111,000 was paid out in 1995, 1 per cent higher than 1994. The average assistance received per recipient in 1995 was NKr 24,000, a figure that varied significantly between the counties. The highest average disbursement per recipient was found in Oslo, with NKr 33,696, and the lowest in Finnmark, with NKr 14,838.

Child-care services (art. 18, para. 3)

276. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 348-353.

277. In Norway children have no legal right to day care. There is still a shortage of day-care institutions in most parts of the country, and the distribution of places is largely based on the needs of the individual child. It is the Government's goal to provide necessary day-care institution places for all children by the year 2000. An amended Act relating to day-care institutions entered into force in January 1996. The Government aims to implement a cash benefit scheme during the four-year period 1997-2001, which will give parents a greater choice of care for their children. It will initially apply to 1- to 2-year-olds.

278. There has been a steady increase in the number of places at day-care institutions in recent years. In 1996 children in day-care institutions constituted 53 per cent of the total age group 0-6 years, and 42 per cent of these were in a private day-care institution. The Government provides grants to approved day-care institutions in both the private and the public sector. Coverage is best for the older pre-schoolchildren; for example, 75 per cent of 5-year-olds were in a day-care institution. From August 1997, children are required to attend school from the age of 6 years, which means there are more places in day-care institutions available for children in the lower age groups.

279. According to section 7 of the Day Care Institutions Act, "day-care institutions for Sami children in Sami districts shall be based on Sami language and culture". The framework plan for day-care institutions (1995) contains a chapter on Sami language and culture, providing guidelines and targets for these day-care institutions without blocking possibilities for local adaptation. This chapter is also intended to be used to increase the knowledge of Sami culture.

280. The revised Day Care Institution Act contains provisions with regard to the quality of the day-care institutions, quality assurance and the strengthening of parents' influence on the running of the day-care institutions.

281. The supervision of day-care institutions has been more precisely defined. The municipalities are responsible for the current supervision, and there are provisions enabling the County Governor to intervene if the municipalities do not fulfil their obligations in this respect.

Standard of living (art. 27, paras. 1-3)

282. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 357-359.

283. A general development during the 1990s has been an increase in real income for all groups, largely due to the international fall in interest rates. From 1986 to 1994, net income for families with small children (below school age) increased by 10 per cent and by 9 per cent for families with school age children. A recent inquiry (NOU 1996:13) has concluded that the economic situation of households with children does not on average deviate much from that of households without children.

284. Although families with children have on the whole shown favourable income trends, this is only part of the picture. Among families with children, the 25 per cent with the lowest incomes have had a smaller increase in net income from 1990 to 1994 than others, while the opposite was the case for the 25 per cent with the highest incomes. Differences in net income between families with children thus appear to be increasing. Seven per cent of all households received social assistance from social welfare offices in 1994. Young singles and single parents were over-represented in this category.

VIII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (arts. 28, 29 and 31)

A. Education, including vocational training and guidance (art. 28)

285. The Norwegian school system has undergone two major reforms since the initial report: REFORM 94 and REFORM 97, which are described below. (Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 364, 367 and 369.)

Primary and lower secondary education (para. 1 (a))

286. Primary and lower secondary education is compulsory, and all children are entitled to education free of charge. The municipalities have the overall responsibility for providing such education. The Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act lays down certain principles concerning the organization of the schools, standards for school buildings, teacher qualifications and main guidelines for the curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools.

287. Day-care facilities for schoolchildren are an optional arrangement for young schoolchildren in the first four years of primary school. For further details, reference is made to paragraph 342 in this report.

288. From 1997, children are required to attend school for 10 years (REFORM 97), commencing the calendar year they reach the age of 6.

289. Under REFORM 97, the national curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools has been revised. The new curriculum, which includes some new subjects, will be introduced over three years, starting in 1997 with grades 1, 2, 5 and 8.

290. The municipalities receive compensation from the State to meet extra costs related to investments in buildings, training of teachers, transport and day care (before and after school hours) for 6-year-olds, and for new teaching material.

291. The vast majority of Norwegian children attend State schools. The Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act authorizes the establishment of private schools, and central government grants are available to such schools pursuant to the Private School Act. There are, however, relatively few private schools in Norway. Of a total of 3,287 schools with altogether 486,739 pupils in 1996/97, there were 67 private schools with 7,485 pupils.

292. The Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act regulates the education of children from language minorities. In 1996/97, 5.8 per cent of all children in primary and lower secondary schools were given lessons in a mother tongue other than Norwegian. The future organization of the mother tongue teaching for immigrants is currently under debate.

293. The Report to the Storting on immigration and multicultural Norway was presented in 1997 (Report No. 17 (1996-1997 to the Storting). As a follow-up to this document, the municipalities will be given full compensation for primary and lower secondary level teaching of immigrants in the 16-20 age group.

294. Children of school age have an unconditional right to primary and lower secondary education regardless of their legal status in the country (see para. 84).

295. At 10 schools in the core area for the Sami minority, 1,095 Sami children are taught in the Sami language with Norwegian as a second language. A Sami curriculum was introduced in primary and lower secondary schools in the core area in 1997.

Students with special educational needs

296. According to the education laws, students with special educational needs have a right to special education. The content and extent of special provisions are decided locally, based on professional assessment of the individual pupil. In 1995/96, about 6.4 per cent of pupils (approximately 31,000) at primary and lower secondary school received special education. Only 0.5 per cent were in special schools outside mainstream schools. For the majority of pupils with special needs, special education is provided at the school they normally attend, without as a rule separating the pupil from his or her classmates.

Upper secondary education (para. 1 (b))

297. Upper secondary education is not compulsory. Apart from the textbooks, the education is free.

298. In August 1994, Norway launched one of its most comprehensive educational reforms in upper secondary education (REFORM 94). All 16-year-olds who complete their compulsory schooling (from 6 to 16 years of age from 1997) obtained a statutory right to at lease three years' upper secondary education. This may lead either to vocational training that formally qualifies them for a job or to qualifications for higher education.

299. Special measures have been taken to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those at risk of becoming drop-outs. Disabled pupils have under certain conditions the right to their first choice of introductory course. They can also be given extra time to complete their schooling - up to five years if necessary, compared with non-disabled pupils, who have three years. A statutory "follow-up" service keeps track of those who have difficulty in adapting to the courses offered and requirements set. The local education authorities are responsible for following up each individual pupil and offering them alternative courses or a combination of formal schooling and work. They carry out this responsibility in cooperation with business and industry and the health and social welfare services.

300. In the 1996/97 school year, more than 97 per cent of the 16- to 19-year-olds entitled to upper secondary education received education or training. The follow-up service registered 7 per cent of the pupils as being in need of some form of help and follow-up. This figure seems to be relatively stable from one year to the next.

301. 1996 was the first year that upper secondary school students were entitled to apprenticeships under REFORM 94; 16,100 students applied and 9,500 of them were offered an apprenticeship. Out of the 6,000 that were not offered apprenticeships, 3,000 accepted alternative, school-based training/education. The lack of apprenticeship places was due to the popularity of certain trades, which had large numbers of applicants. Some of these trades were introduced with REFORM 94, and the situation is expected to improve when these trades become more established.

Measures to make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity (para 1 (c))

302. In 1994/95, there were approximately 170,000 students attending regional colleges and universities, an increase of more than 50 per cent over the last six years. In 1995, 29 per cent of all women aged 19-24 years and 22 per cent of all men in the same age group attended regional colleges or universities. In 1996, 81 per cent of the qualified applicants (men and women) were admitted, and more than 50 per cent of the students were admitted to their first priority course of study. The State Educational Loan Fund is required to offer all students and pupils the opportunity to finance their education regardless of their parents' income. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 382.

Information (para. 1 (d))

303. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 383.

Reducing the number of pupils who do not complete education programmes (para. 1 (e))

304. Reference is made to paragraphs 299-300 of the present report and to paragraphs 384-386 of Norway's initial report.

Humane treatment in education programmes (para. 2)

305. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 388.

International cooperation (para. 3)

306. The World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, and the World Summit for Children, held in New York, both in 1990, were important events for multi- and bilateral development assistance in the education sector. Norwegian development assistance places great emphasis on children and their need for education. The amount of development assistance allocated for educational purposes has increased in recent years, and in 1996, 8 per cent (NKr 484.5 million) of all development assistance was allocated to educational programmes.

307. As part of the follow-up of the plan of action adopted by the EFA Conference, Norway has taken an active part in the dialogue on strategies and programmes for ensuring and enhancing the quality of education by participating in the EFA Forum and at meetings of the International Working Group on Education. Norway has also maintained a dialogue with UNESCO through the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the Development of African Education (DAE).

308. A separate working group has been established under the DAE that focuses on girls and science teaching in Africa. Norway is coordinator for the group and is the head of a donor consortium that is financing the pilot project Female Education in Maths and Science in Africa (FEMSA). Norway has also supported programmes at undergraduate and graduate level in women's law at the University of Zimbabwe.

309. Norway's bilateral assistance to basic education is concentrated on Bangladesh and Pakistan, and the emphasis has been on primary education and education for girls. In 1995, Norway and Bangladesh strengthened their cooperation in this sector. Emphasis was put on increasing the number of girls permitted to attend lower secondary school and providing education for groups outside the normal school system, including support for special education, support for disabled children and improving educational and administrative aspects of educational institutions.

310. The NGOs that receive public grants and are engaged in development cooperation projects have estimated that three quarters of their allocations go to projects focusing on children. The projects supported by Norwegian NGOs are mainly concerned with health and education measures. In addition to the building and rehabilitation of schools, these include supplying equipment, educational programmes, financing of teachers and institution building. Children in children's homes, disabled children and street children are all regarded as important target groups by these NGOs. Other important targets are orphans, refugee children, child-care institutions, child welfare, scouts and sports activities.

B. Aims of education (art. 29)

311. The aims of education are set out in the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act, in the Upper Secondary Education Act, and in the national curriculum.

312. School education must foster human equality, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international co-responsibility. It is intended to lay the foundation for higher education and for life-long learning and provide a common basis of knowledge, culture and values for a high level of expertise in the population. Education must be adapted to the individual abilities of each child. Emphasis is put on the establishment of good working relationships between teachers and pupils, between school and home, and between school and work. In cooperation with the home, primary and lower secondary education must help to give the pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, develop their mental and physical abilities, give them a good general knowledge and enable them to become useful and independent human beings. Upper secondary education aims at developing pupils' skills, understanding and responsibility and assisting them in their personal development. It must contribute to increased awareness and understanding of Christian and humanist values, the national cultural heritage, democratic ideas and scientific thought and method.

313. A new curriculum for the subject "Religious Knowledge and Ethical Education" has recently been adopted by the Storting (see paras. 138-140).

C. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)

314. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 400-401 and 405.

Land-use planning

315. Outdoor areas and facilities that are to be used by children and adolescents must be protected against pollution, noise, traffic and other health hazards. Outdoor areas must be provided where children can pursue their own interests and create their own playground in the local environment. The municipalities must ensure that day-care facilities have adequately large and suitable outdoor areas. When re-zoning areas that were previously designated as outdoor areas used for or suitable for play activities, or areas that have been designated as common areas, a fully equivalent replacement must be provided.

Recreation, nature and cultural heritage

316. The Act relating to open air recreation of 1957 provides for the right of access of the public to forests and uncultivated land. Pursuant to this Act, the municipalities are responsible for making such access possible for everyone. The Planning and Building Act is the main measure in this regard, and the national policy guidelines laid down pursuant to this Act for protecting the interests of children and adolescents are an important measure for safeguarding green areas, trees, lakes and rivers as playgrounds and activity sites for young people. Organizations, families, schools and

day-care facilities are important target groups for this work, which will be followed up under the Local Agenda 21 programme. The Norwegian Cultural Heritage year (1997) also focused on activities for children and adolescents.

317. The proportion of people who take part in outdoor recreation in Norway is high in all age groups, and outdoor recreation is still an important family activity during weekends and holidays. In a survey from 1992, 70-80 per cent of people aged 13-19 years said they had gone walking in the countryside, skiing or fishing in the course of the previous year. Later surveys, however, show changes in young peoples' attitudes to and use of nature. All over the country children participate less in berry-picking than before. Fishing is less common among adolescents in the Oslo region than in the northern parts of Norway. Cycling and jogging in the forest are more popular among adolescents than among other groups but interest in cross-country skiing seems to be declining; young people seem to prefer alpine skiing.

318. The national programme for outdoor recreation (Report No. 5-1996 from the Directorate for Nature Management) pays special attention to children and adolescents and various measures and activities are being implemented or planned to improve the conditions for participation in traditional outdoor recreation activities, such as fishing. The Act relating to salmonids and fresh-water fish etc. of 1992 provides for the right of children under the age of 16 to catch fresh water fish without a fishing licence. Grants are given to municipalities to improve the fishing conditions in rivers and lakes close to densely populated areas. A number of private organizations exist to promote open-air recreation among the public, and families, children and adolescents are important target groups. These activities are supported by State grants.

319. State funds are also available for purchasing and management of special areas for outdoor recreation. As of 31 December 1996, 1,347 State-supported areas had been set aside for outdoor recreation. About 30 per cent of these were purchased directly by the State; the remaining 70 per cent were purchased by municipalities or intermunicipal outdoor recreation committees receiving State grants. Most of the areas set aside for outdoor recreation are close to densely populated areas or in popular recreation areas. Along the south coast some 275 areas are specially protected as coastal parks.

320. Outdoor recreation provides a sound foundation for better health and a better quality of life. There are reports from day-care facilities that increasing numbers of children have poor motor development, probably due to lack of outdoor play and physical activity. Experts hold that playing in natural surroundings will benefit the motor, intellectual and social development of the child. The health authorities have implemented a national programme to increase awareness among parents, health workers, teachers and politicians of the importance of giving children sufficient time and opportunity to play out of doors.

Participation in cultural activities

321. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 402-421.

322. Children and adolescents are the most active participants in almost all cultural activities, and girls are more active than boys in all fields except sport. More than 65 per cent of all children between 9 and 13 years of age, and almost 50 per cent of the adolescents between 14 and 19, take part in one or more organized cultural activities. Sport is the most popular leisure activity. About three out of four in the age group 7-15 years participate actively in some form of sport.

323. There are also a large number of children and youth organizations with a wide range of activities. Nine out of ten 15-year-olds are or have been members of a voluntary organization. These organizations are important features of the cultural scene, and most of them are supported financially by the State. Boys and girls participate with approximately the same frequency in voluntary organizations. Approximately 20 per cent of all adolescents participate in choirs and music activities, which are the largest group of activities after sport.

324. Three out of four children between the ages of 9 and 19 use the public or school library. There are, however, social differences with regard to participation in cultural activities. Children of parents with a high level of education and a high family income participate more often than those having parents with a low income and a low level of education. In terms of the number of books borrowed, girls are more active users of public and school libraries than boys. Differences may also be caused by varying geographical access to cultural activities. The school is the most important cultural institution for children and adolescents, and it plays a major role in diminishing the social differences in the use of cultural facilities.

325. From 1997 a new curriculum, with more emphasis on art and culture, is being implemented in primary and lower secondary schools. From 1 July 1998 all municipalities also have to offer voluntary programmes in music and the arts for children and adolescents. Three hundred and fifty out of 435 municipalities already have such programmes. By introducing a plan of action for aesthetic subjects and the cultural dimension in schools, the State seeks to provide for increased cooperation between schools, their local community and local institutions.

326. The State employs various means to stimulate children's culture, which is one of the priority areas of the Norwegian Council for Cultural Affairs. The Council's main objective is to promote a creative environment for literature and art. In the following, various measures implemented in the cultural and media sectors are described.

Radio and television broadcasting

327. There are special rules regulating radio and television commercials in relation to children and adolescents. It is prohibited by law to broadcast commercials in connection with children's programmes, or commercials having children as a target group. Children's and adolescents' programmes may not be sponsored by any natural or legal person whose aim is commercial.

328. Programmes which may have a harmful effect on children and youth may not be transmitted at hours when children and adolescents constitute a substantial proportion of the viewers.

329. The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), which is a State broadcasting company, produces its own programmes for children and adolescents. The number of radio and television programmes for children and adolescents has increased in recent years. The national commercial television channel, TV2, offers programmes for children during weekends.

Children's films

330. Minimum age limits have been set for the public showing of films and videos. State grants are available for the writing of scripts and the production of children's films. Grants are also given for importing worthwhile children's films. Some 430,000 children attend school performances every year. There is a special State children's film consultant working in cooperation with the National Association of Municipal Cinemas.

331. In 1995 the Government launched a campaign to combat violence in the visual media under the auspices of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The campaign involves active collaboration with the most important organizations and institutions in the visual media field. The campaign disseminates information and enhances understanding of visual language, which is a basis for a more critical and conscious use of the media.

Production and distribution of children's books

332. There is a special purchasing programme for contemporary Norwegian children's books. Every year around 100 fiction titles and 20 non-fiction titles are purchased and distributed to 1,550 libraries (1,000 public libraries and 550 school libraries).

333. Children and adolescents use libraries more frequently than any other age group. Books are borrowed free of charge. State funds are available for the production of illustrated children's books. Three Norwegian and one Sami children's magazines receive grants from the State. Funds are also granted for various projects focusing on books for children and adolescents, presenting Norwegian authors and contemporary literature and stimulating the use of libraries. The Directorate for Public and School Libraries arranges campaigns and competitions to promote the reading of books.

Music

334. In 1995 two thirds of all the concerts arranged or supported by NorConcert (the Norwegian Concert Institute) were given for children and adolescents. Six thousand five hundred of such concerts, almost 30 per day, were held in schools and day-care institutions. In 1995 almost 340 municipalities had their own music school. A number of children's choir and music organizations receive State grants, and State funding is also available for festivals and workshops for classical music.

Museums

335. Norway has 800 museums, 340 of which receive public grants covering more than 70 per cent of the total expenses. Nearly 20 per cent of the visitors are children and adolescents, and some museums have special educational programmes for schoolchildren. In 1995 1.2 million children visited a museum; in the group 9-15 years of age more than 60 per cent. A growing number of the collections, exhibitions and educational programmes feature children's culture.

Theatre

336. All theatres supported by the State have performances for children and adolescents as part of their general repertoire. One third of the performances given by the regular theatres are for children and adolescents.

337. In 1995 half of the repertoire of the State Touring Theatre, and more than 60 per cent of the performances, were produced for children and adolescents, and many of them were performed in cooperation with schools. The Touring Theatre even has a special unit that produces theatre for adolescents.

338. Independent theatre groups receive grants from the Norwegian Council for Cultural Affairs. Almost 75 per cent of the plays put on by these groups are for children and adolescents.

339. The Norwegian Amateur Theatre Association, which is an umbrella organization for all amateur drama in Norway, receives an annual grant from the State. A substantial proportion of these funds benefit children and adolescents since they are spent on individual drama associations, practical assistance to children's theatre groups and courses.

Visual arts, handicrafts and design

340. State grants are available for museums and organizations in this field. Making visual works of art known to children and adolescents is a priority area. Approximately half of the exhibitions shown by the national Touring Exhibitions 1995 were especially intended for children and adolescents. The International Children's Art Museum, which was opened in Oslo in 1986, exhibits children's art from all over the world. The museum has also arranged worldwide drawing competitions that have been shown in many countries. The museum receives grants from the State.

State funding for cultural activities

341. More than one third of the grants from the most important State sources - the Norwegian Culture Fund and the Foundation for Audio-visual Productions - are given in support of cultural activities for children.

Day-care facilities for schoolchildren

342. Day-care facilities are provided on an optional basis for schoolchildren in the first four grades of primary school. For children with special needs, this may be extended until grade 7. In 1996, such facilities were available

in 88 per cent of all municipalities, and approximately 62,000 children participated. Provision is made for play, cultural and leisure activities and homework.

Recreation clubs and other leisure activities

343. Reference is made to paragraphs 409, 412-414, 416 and 419 in Norway's initial report.

344. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has increased its support for schemes for improving conditions for children and youth from 10-12 years up to 25 years of age growing up in the nine largest cities.

345. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs wishes to increase opportunities for young Norwegians to gain international experience, particularly through youth exchange programmes and international cooperation between NGOs. Under the terms of the EEA (European Economic Area) agreement, Norway participates in the exchange programme "Youth for Europe". Through this programme, targeted at the 15- to 25-year-old age group, grants are given to stimulate contact and exchanges, training of youth leaders, contact between public and voluntary organizations that work with international youth issues, information to young people and research on youth issues.

346. The Nordic Youth Committee is the advisory body to the Nordic Council on child and youth policy issues, and is responsible for the development of Nordic collaboration in this area. Collaboration between youth researchers and a Nordic youth research programme is a priority area and is presently under consideration. Another important area is democracy and participation. A Nordic network has been established for youth taking part in various participation projects. The Nordic Youth Committee is also responsible for Nordic coordination of youth policy at the European level. A Steering Group for Nordic Child and Youth Culture was appointed in 1996. These two bodies will join forces in developing collaboration between the Nordic and Baltic countries on projects and activities for young people.

347. In response to a report to the Storting on voluntary child and youth organizations (Report No. 32 (1996/97) to the Storting), the Ministry has revised its guidelines for grants in 1997 and continues to give priority to independent organizations for children and adolescents that also encourage active participation from their members.

348. The Norwegian Sports Federation has prepared its own guidelines for sport for children which encompass all activities for children up to the age of 12. An emphasis is placed on all-round activity and there are restrictions on competitions for the youngest age groups. All sports clubs are bound by these guidelines.

IX. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES
(arts. 22, 38, 39, 40, 37 (b)-(d), 32-36)

A. Children in emergency situations

Refugee children

349. Children coming to Norway as asylum applicants or as refugees through UNHCR (quota refugees) are mostly accompanied by their parents or other family members with parental responsibility. When adults apply for asylum or permission to stay in Norway, their children automatically have the same status whether the application is granted or refused. This reflects the view that it is in the children's best interest to be with their parents, regardless of the outcome of the application. It is also in line with the UNHCR recommendations. In recent years, the number of children in reception centres has been somewhat reduced, and as of 1 January 1998 there were 467 children in reception centres (25.5 per cent of all residents in the centres).

350. Some of the children and adolescents arriving in the country are unaccompanied minors applying for asylum. Unaccompanied minors are persons under 18 years old arriving in Norway without parents or other adults with a formal parental responsibility. From 1988 to 1995, a total of 1,216 unaccompanied minors arrived in Norway. Of these, 1,155 were granted asylum or permission to stay. Most of the unaccompanied minors were between 16 and 18 years of age. The youngest (under seven years of age) seldom arrive alone, even if they are not accompanied by a parent or other adults with a formal parental responsibility.

351. In 1995, the Ministry of Local Government and Labour initiated and carried out a discussion on the experiences gained from and the status of the 1989 plan for reception of unaccompanied minor asylum applicants. As a follow-up to this report, six different ministries have come together and formulated a new strategy for dealing with this group of asylum applicants. There has been a marked reduction in the number of reception centres since 1994, and a corresponding strengthening of the expertise and capacity in selected municipalities.

352. The intention is to keep the time spent in a reception centre to a minimum for unaccompanied minors so that their life situations can be normalized as rapidly as possible. Legal assistance is provided and a guardian is appointed for each child. The length of time spent in reception centres has been reduced to 2.5 months. As from 1996, it has been possible to settle most unaccompanied minors before a residence permit is granted. A special subsidy was introduced for municipal councils that settled unaccompanied minors. This subsidy replaces a previous arrangement whereby the State reimbursed the municipalities for the actual expenses incurred for child welfare. The present subsidy is paid up to and includes the year the child turns 18 years of age. The subsidy for 1996 was NKr 80,000 per child per year.

353. The municipalities are responsible for meeting the needs of unaccompanied minor asylum applicants when they are transferred from a refugee

reception centre. The Directorate of Immigration offers guidance to the municipalities, and efforts are made to raise the level of expertise in this field among the relevant personnel at all levels.

354. Unaccompanied minor asylum applicants, children of asylum applicants, and children without a legal residence permit have the same right to primary and lower secondary education (see para. 85) as children with refugee status and all other children living in Norway.

355. Adolescents between 16 and 19 years of age with a permanent or temporary residence permit have the same right to upper secondary education as other adolescents of this age. Completed primary and lower secondary school is normally required for admission to upper secondary school. Unaccompanied minor asylum applicants waiting for their refugee status to be decided may, however, be admitted to upper secondary school while waiting for their situation to be clarified.

356. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration has six regional offices. Each office has established agreements with two or more specially selected municipalities which have the necessary expertise to meet the needs of and to settle unaccompanied minor refugees and asylum seekers. The Directorate has developed a standard questionnaire which the municipalities can use to make sure they address all the relevant issues in connection with the individual settlement of unaccompanied minors.

357. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees constitutes, together with the Norwegian Immigration Act, the legal framework for the determination of refugee status, and the latter contains provisions concerning procedures and legal aid in asylum cases.

358. There are few provisions in national legislation dealing with minor asylum seekers, but there are several acts dealing with children in general. In addition to the Immigration Act, they protect minors against unlawful acts on the part of the State. Some of the most important acts are: The Guardianship Act of 22 April 1927; The Children Act of 8 April 1981; Act of 6 March 1981 relating to the commissioner for children; Act of 17 July 1992 relating to child welfare services.

359. The Ministry of Justice has issued guidelines for the treatment of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. These guidelines regulate the role of the guardian in general, during police examinations and in relation to the work performed by child welfare authorities. Unaccompanied minors are assisted by a guardian at each step of the asylum procedure. They are also entitled to a lawyer. The application for asylum is made by the minor, the guardian or the lawyer. The police examine the minor with the guardian present. The lawyer may attend the examination if he/she wishes to do so.

360. In addition to the general rules in the Immigration Act and appurtenant Regulations, the Public Administration Act and the Guardianship Act, the Ministry of Justice and the Directorate of Immigration have issued circulars to the police which are applicable to the examination of minor asylum seekers.

361. The general principle in cases concerning unaccompanied minor asylum seekers is that the best interest of the child is normally reunification with his/her family in the country of origin, if this can be done safely. The authorities often encounter difficulties in tracking the family of the minor during the asylum-seeking procedure. However, applications for family reunification are often made at a later stage, and the Immigration Act and Regulations contain provisions governing family reunification. Minors who are granted asylum have the right to be reunited with their parents and unmarried brothers or sisters under the age of 18 when these are living together with their parents.

362. Unaccompanied minors are not returned if parents or other close relatives cannot be located. An unaccompanied minor who for this reason cannot be returned will be granted a residence permit on humanitarian grounds if he/she does not qualify for asylum.

Children in armed conflicts (art. 38), including physical and psychological recovery and social integration

363. Some of the children and adolescents coming to Norway as refugees have experienced war, torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. There is a national resource centre for the psychosocial treatment of refugees in Oslo. This centre provides treatment for minors as well and offers training programmes for professionals in the field. Regional psychosocial teams are responsible for treating refugees within their geographical area.

B. Children involved with the system of administration of juvenile justice (art. 40)

The administration of juvenile justice

364. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 430-435.

Children deprived of their liberty, including any form of detention, imprisonment or placement in custodial settings (art. 37 (b)-(d))

365. The age of criminal responsibility in Norway is 15 years. In 1996, 93 adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age were imprisoned, largely for theft, assault and robbery. All of the adolescents imprisoned were boys. (Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 436-438.)

366. Asylum seekers who have had their applications rejected have to leave the country. A reasonable time limit for voluntary departure is set. If the rejected asylum seeker does not comply with the order to leave the country voluntarily, the police may, pursuant to the Immigration Act, impose upon him/her: (a) an obligation to report; (b) the surrender of his/her passport or other identity document; (c) a particular place of residence. If these measures are considered to be insufficient, asylum seekers may, pursuant to the Immigration Act, be arrested and remanded in custody while awaiting transportation. A centre is especially designed for this purpose, and especially equipped for families awaiting deportation. The centre includes a playroom, equipped with toys. The staff are not connected with the police or

prison service. The police have to seek the consent of the court as soon as possible, and not later than the day after the arrest if this is at all possible, if they wish to keep the rejected asylum seeker in custody. In cases where children are kept in custody at the centre for a period exceeding 24 hours, the police have to inform the local child welfare office. The child welfare office may arrange for daily trips to nearby parks, playgrounds, etc. or even for the children to be moved from the centre if this is considered necessary. According to the Immigration Act, a foreign national may also be arrested and remanded in custody if there is reason to suspect that he or she has given a false identity. This provision is not applied in cases regarding minors.

The sentencing of children, with particular reference to the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (art. 37 (a))

367. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 439.

Physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of the child (art. 39)

368. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 440.

C. Children in situations of exploitation, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration

Economic exploitation of children, including child labour (art. 32)

369. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 60-62 regarding paid work. Reference is also made to paragraph 60 of the present report, regarding the conference on child labour held in Oslo in 1997.

370. Since 1994, all young people who have completed primary and lower secondary school have a right to a further three years of upper secondary education. Consequently, hardly any children are in full-time work under the age of 18. However, a bill amending chapter IX on regarding the employment of children and young people of the Act relating to worker protection and the working environment will be submitted to the Storting during the spring session in 1998. The amendment is made pursuant to EU Directive 94/93/EC, regulating working conditions for children and young persons. (Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 441-443.)

Drug abuse

371. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 444 and 445.

372. Norway has adopted the following conventions on international cooperation to combat drugs: The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961); The Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971); The Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988).

373. Norway has also participated actively in the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and in the Dublin Group, which is a consultative forum for the largest contributors to the United Nations Drug Control Programme. Norway

is further involved in Interpol, the World Customs Organization and the Cooperation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs (the Pompidou Group).

374. The Norwegian Directorate for the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Problems is responsible for documenting of all aspects of drug use and drug problems and carries out extensive advice and information activities with regard to various organizations, municipalities, schools, youth clubs, etc.

375. For over 10 years the Research Council of Norway has coordinated a research programme on drugs and drug abuse problems, funded by various ministries. The National Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research has conducted surveys on adolescent use of cannabis in Oslo since 1968 which were extended to cover the use of other narcotic drugs, alcohol and tobacco. From 1990, national surveys have been conducted annually.

376. The National Institute for Drug and Alcohol Research carries out annual surveys on the use of alcohol and other drugs in the population, including adolescents. Although alcohol is by far the most common drug among Norwegian adolescents, and also the source of most substance abuse-related problems, the use of alcohol among adolescents has stabilized and has even been reduced in the last 10 years. Smoking showed a steady decrease in prevalence from the 1970s until the mid-1980s. From around 1985, the figure has been relatively stable at around 20 per cent daily smokers for the age group 16-18 years, approximately evenly divided between the sexes.

377. An analysis conducted by Norwegian Youth Research has shown that the large majority of Norwegian adolescents have a healthy and socially acceptable lifestyle. In a recent report on drug use policy (Report No. 16 (1996-97) to the Storting), however, concern is expressed about the high levels of cannabis use among youth in Oslo. Another disturbing trend is the fact that the use of heroin and amphetamines, which was previously confined to the capital and larger cities, appears to have spread throughout the country.

Pregnant drug abusers and children of drug abusers

378. The Ministries of Health and Social Affairs and Children and Family Affairs have formulated a plan of action (1995-1997) to strengthen the service offered to pregnant drug abusers and children of drug abusers. In 1995, the Act relating to social services was revised in order to make it possible to keep pregnant drug abusers in institutions, if necessary against their will and throughout the entire pregnancy. Compulsory treatment may only be enforced if there is a high risk that the child would otherwise be physically harmed due to the mother's drug abuse.

379. The Wanda Centre, established in 1992, is a private, voluntary service for children and adolescents in families where there is alcohol abuse. The centre also answers telephone inquiries and gives advice and support, individually or in groups. Outreach activities comprise information and counselling to schools, social welfare and child-care services and other public bodies.

D. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)

380. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 449-460, and to paragraph 383 in this report regarding provisions in the revised Day Care Institutions Act.

381. As a follow-up to the plan of action against the sexual violation of children, a report to the Storting on the matter was submitted by the Government in 1993. Suggestions in the report include improvements in children's legal safeguards and protection against sexual abuse, and raising the level of expertise in the relevant services in order to ensure proper and expeditious service or help. Several expert bodies in the field have been established, among others (in 1995-1998) a National Resource Centre for Sexually Abused Children at Aker Hospital, Oslo. (Reference is made to paragraphs 42 and 192 in the present report.)

382. In collaboration with various ministries, organizations and expert bodies, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs pursues the development of measures against the sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes at regional, national and international levels. This work will be seen in relation to initiatives and resolutions made by the United Nations, the European Council, the Nordic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States as well as non-governmental organizations concerning child pornography, prostitution and trafficking involving children (see para. 386).

383. In 1995, an amendment to the Day Care Institutions Act was passed providing that any applicant for a job in a day-care institution must present a certificate issued by the police stating that he/she has never been charged or sentenced for sexual abuse of children. Corresponding amendments to the acts regulating employment in schools and in the child welfare service have been considered.

Sexual exploitation of children in other countries

384. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraph 458.

385. Through Interpol, Norway has engaged in police collaboration with other countries in order to combat the sexual abuse of children and other crimes against minors. The establishment of a permanent, international working party to meet this challenge was decided at Interpol's General Assembly in Dakar, November 1992, and Norway is presently chairing the group.

386. Save the Children Norway is actively engaged in combating the sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes, in developing countries as well. The organization has been particularly active in matters relating to what is known as sex tourism and the dissemination of child pornography through the Internet. Together with the Commissioner for Children, Save the Children has initiated the establishment of an international network against such exploitation. Norway committed itself to join the declaration and plan of action against the commercial exploitation of children adopted at the World Congress in Stockholm in 1996 and is currently in the process of formulating a national plan to follow up the Congress. Norway has endorsed recommendation No. 11 (1991) of the Council of the European Communities on sexual

exploitation, pornography and trafficking involving children and young adults, and in 1996, it endorsed a Nordic Council recommendation on combating the sexual abuse of children.

Sale, trafficking and abduction (art. 35)

387. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 233-266 on abduction and paragraphs 222-231 on adoption.

Other forms of exploitation (art. 36)

388. In recent years, increased attention has been paid to the problem of violence in the visual media, and particularly the way in which this influences children. The internationalization of telecommunications has made control more complicated. The Government therefore launched a plan against media violence in 1995, involving four different ministries and a number of organizations in the field.

E. Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (art. 30)

Immigrant children

389. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 473-477.

390. A report to the Storting on immigration and multicultural Norway was submitted in early 1997. The fundamental principles on which the report is based are that all citizens, regardless of ethnic or national origin, have a right to live according to their own values, observe their cultural traditions and practise their religion, as long as this does not conflict with Norwegian law or fundamental human rights. One of the Government's aims is that all children and adolescents must be given the opportunity to develop their own sense of identity and ensure their own future.

Sami children and adolescents

391. Reference is made to Norway's initial report, paragraphs 461-472.

392. The Sami are recognized as an indigenous people with a right to their own language, culture, means of subsistence and way of life.

393. Sami children and adolescents have more contact with the mainstream of Norwegian society than they had previously, and many of them have adapted to Norwegian society without abandoning their own rich cultural heritage. Ignorance, negative attitudes and indifference towards the Sami people still exist, however, in the Norwegian population.

394. The development of a Sami identity is endangered if the language and the culture are not visibly present in family life, in institutions like schools or day-care institutions, in the local community and in the media. The Norwegian authorities try to counterbalance the influence of Norwegian culture on Sami children and adolescents by creating environments for children where Sami and Norwegian culture as far as possible have an equal status.

395. The revised Day Care Institutions Act (1995) has strengthened the rights of Sami children. Forty-four Sami day-care institutions with a total of approximately 1,000 places in 14 different municipalities were given public grants in 1996. The number of Sami day-care institutions has increased during the last few years, reflecting a growing realization of the importance of supplying services to Sami children based on Sami language and culture.

396. The Government aims to channel the State grants for Sami issues as much as possible through the Sami Parliament. For example, the Parliament uses funds from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development to improve living conditions for Sami children and for education scholarships for Sami adolescents.

397. There is little systematic knowledge about Sami children and adolescents and statistics in this area are unsatisfactory. However, in some areas, such as schools and day-care institutions, we have considerable experience and data have been collected. In other areas, like health, there is little information available, and few measures have been aimed particularly at Sami children and adolescents. The Ministry of Child and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Social and Health Affairs are cooperating with the Sami Parliament on plans for improving the living conditions of Sami children and adolescents.

398. One of the goals of the Sami Parliament is to strengthen the sense of identity of Sami children and adolescents and their ties with the Sami community. A committee was appointed to formulate a plan of action which was submitted to the Sami Assembly in late 1997 and will be followed up in the next few years.

399. There are three articles in particular in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that deal with children in indigenous populations. They deal with linguistic needs and the mass media (art. 17), the content of education (art. 29), and the right to enjoy one's culture and to use one's own language (art. 30). The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has supported projects aimed at promoting and developing a sense of identity among Sami children and adolescents, for instance the publication of a Sami youth magazine. The Ministry also supported the arrangement of a Sami youth conference that resulted in the establishment of a new, independent Sami youth organization.

400. The Norwegian Institute of Child Welfare Research in Northern Norway was established in 1994. Among the priorities of the Centre is the development of expertise in the child welfare services for Sami children. A number of projects have been implemented, for example the project "Child Welfare in a Sami Context". The first steps have been taken in the development of a network for research and development in Sami child welfare which will be followed up by specific projects in collaboration with the relevant Sami professionals.